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Strong-armed QB Baker Mayfield keeping Browns' playoff hopes alive
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A Marine with the 9th Engineering Support Battalion takes part in a drill at the Jungle Warfare Training Center at Camp Gonsalvez, Okinawa, on Dec. 4.

CARLOS M. VÁZQUEZ II/Stars and Stripes

Welcome to the JUNGLE

Marine engineers tackle tough terrain during Okinawa exercise **Page 6**

Special operations boss calls for change amid troop misconduct allegations

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The head of U.S. special operations forces has issued a call to action after a series of high-profile instances of misconduct revealed a damaged culture of discipline in the ranks.

"Left unchecked, an eroded values system threatens to erode the trust of our fellow comrades, our senior leaders, and ultimately the



Thomas

American people," U.S. Special Operations Command boss Gen. Tony Thomas wrote in a message to the force Wednesday.

The message, which calls for "rapid and focused action to begin to identify and address the underlying causes," comes after a series of incidents that has raised alarms within the military.

Among the cases that have garnered headlines: four special

operations troops charged in connection with the 2017 murder of a Green Beret while on assignment in Mali, and a SEAL standing trial on charges he murdered an Islamic State prisoner in Iraq. The ambush of a special operations team in Niger, which led to the deaths of four soldiers, also resulted in reprimands of two senior officers involved in mission planning.

SEE MISCONDUCT ON PAGE 8

'Correcting this trend will take committed leadership at all levels of our command and personal moral courage by all.'

Gen. Tony Thomas
commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, in a message to the force Wednesday

EUROPE

More German police will guard Christmas markets

By MARCUS KLOECKNER
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Police throughout Germany and especially near U.S. military bases are boosting security at Christmas markets after a deadly attack in the French city of Strasbourg this week.

"At the Christmas markets — especially at the entrances — police will show significantly more open presence" and police officers will visibly carry automatic weapons, said Roger Lewentz, interior minister for Germany's Rheinland-Pfalz, speaking to parliament on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, a gunman opened fire in the area around the Strasbourg Christmas market, a popular destination for Americans at military bases a short drive over the border in Rheinland-Pfalz,

home to tens of thousands of U.S. troops and Defense Department civilians, mainly in the Kaiserslautern area.

While the suspected shooter remained at large, German police were helping search for him along the border, Lewentz said.

The police will increase their presence at large Christmas markets in the cities of Mainz, Ludwigshafen and Trier after a review of security measures initiated in the wake of the attack, an interior ministry spokesman said Thursday.

"We are already on a high security level for our Christmas markets," the spokesman, Joachim Winkler, said. "But there will definitely be more policemen on the streets (after the attack)."

Security at public gatherings in Germany was boosted following a

2016 attack at the Christmas market in Berlin's Breitscheidplatz that killed 12 people.

At the Kaiserslautern Christmas market, security measures have not changed from last year's heightened posture, which involved video surveillance, roadblocks and police patrols, said Bernhard Erfurt, a spokesman with the city police.

Uniformed and plainclothes officers help secure the market, Erfurt said, and police conduct ID and traffic checks during its run, which began Nov. 26 and ends Dec. 23.

In Stuttgart, home to the headquarters of the U.S. European and Africa commands, security measures "have been adjusted," said Stephan Widman, a police spokesman. Police trained specially to respond to a terrorist



ANN PINSON/Stars and Stripes

Following the recent attack in Strasbourg, France, several German cities are increasing security measures at their Christmas markets, including Kaiserslautern's, above — shown on opening day, Nov. 26.

attack or a shooting spree are on the streets, he said.

Security measures in Berlin and Potsdam have also been increased, and in Nuremberg the police were already on high alert prior to the attack, police spokes-

woman Elke Schoenwald told the local news outlet Nordbayern.de.

The security situation in Germany is still focused on a "high abstract threat" of Islamic extremist violence, she said.

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French police try to catch Strasbourg suspect, dead or alive

Associated Press

STRASBOURG, France — French security forces are trying to catch the suspected Strasbourg gunman dead or alive Thursday, as the city in eastern France mourned with flowers and lit candles left at the site of the attack near its famous Christmas market.

More than 700 officers are involved in the manhunt for Cherif Chekatt, 29, who has a long criminal record and had been flagged for extremism, government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux told CNews television.

Asked about instructions given to police forces searching for Chekatt, Griveaux said the focus was on catching the suspect "as soon as possible," no matter whether he was dead or alive, to "put an end to the manhunt."

Chekatt allegedly shouted "God is great!" in Arabic and sprayed gunfire during Tuesday's rampage near Strasbourg's Christmas market. Local authorities increased Thursday the death toll to three. The attack wounded 13 others, including five in serious condition, the prefecture of the Strasbourg region said.

Prosecutors have opened a terror investigation into the attack.

Police have distributed a photo of Chekatt, who was wounded in an exchange of fire with security forces, with the warning: "Individual dangerous, above all do not intervene."

France raised its three-stage threat index to the highest level and deployed 1,800 additional soldiers across France to help patrol streets and secure crowded events.

The usually busy streets of Strasbourg were eerily empty on Thursday morning,

with a heavy police and military presence. The Christmas market was closed at least through Thursday, authorities said.

French authorities said that the suspect, born in Strasbourg, had run-ins with police starting at age 10 and his first conviction was at age 13.

Chekatt had been convicted 27 times, mostly in France but also in Switzerland and Germany, for crimes including armed robbery. He had been flagged for extremism and was on a watch list.

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PACIFIC

Report: Expert says Chinese navy should 'ram' US ships

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

A Chinese military expert has suggested his nation's navy should ram the next U.S. warship to sail through waters claimed by China, according to a report by the state-run newspaper Global Times.

According to the newspaper, Dai Xu, president of China's Institute of Marine Safety and Cooperation, on Saturday said: "If the US warships break into Chinese waters again, I suggest that two warships should be sent: one to stop it, and another one to ram it."

Dai spoke at a conference held by the Global Times in Beijing, where officials and experts addressed "key topics of 2018 and their predications for 2019," according to the article.

The U.S. regularly sends vessels on



Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

This image obtained by gCaptain.com shows a confrontation between the USS Decatur, left, and a Chinese destroyer in the South China Sea on Sept. 30.

freedom-of-navigation missions in the South and East China seas claimed by China but recognized by most legal experts under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as international waters.

Dai's suggestion follows two publicized

U.S. patrols into contested waters. The first resulted in a near-miss confrontation in September with a Chinese warship close to the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

During that incident Sept. 30, the Chinese vessel made what Navy officials called an "unsafe and unprofessional" move by sailing within 45 yards of the USS Decatur, which was conducting a freedom-of-navigation operation. The Decatur veered away to avoid a collision.

On Nov. 26, the guided-missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville sailed around the Paracel Islands, also in the South China Sea and claimed by China, according to officials of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. The Navy reported nothing untoward occurred on that patrol.

The Chancellorsville — as part of the USS Ronald Reagan carrier strike group

— the week prior to the patrol had made a port call in Hong Kong, where the USS Wasp was denied a visit in October. China denied the Wasp entry after the two countries in September imposed another round of tariffs on each other's imports.

In addition to the tariffs, the U.S. sanctioned China for its purchase last year of fighter jets and a surface-to-air missile system this year from Russia. Afterward, China objected to a U.S. plan to sell military equipment to Taiwan, which China considers a breakaway province, according to The Asahi Shimbun on Sept. 27.

Global Times said in its article that Dai considered freedom-of-navigation operations to be "provocation against China."

"In our territorial waters, we won't allow U.S. warships to create disturbance," Dai said, according to the newspaper.

Civilian pilot hospitalized after jet crashes off Honolulu coast during exercise

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A civilian pilot was hospitalized Wednesday after his plane crashed about 5 miles off the coast of Honolulu during a military exercise by the Hawaii Air National Guard, military officials said.

The pilot, a civilian contractor flying in conjunction with the Sentry Aloha exercise, ejected from the Hawker Hunter aircraft

about 2:30 p.m., according to a statement issued by Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, the staging area for the drills.

The pilot, who has not been identified, was rescued by a sailboat, transferred to a Coast Guard boat and then taken to a hospital.

The 47-year-old "appeared to have traumatic injuries," Honolulu Emergency Services spokesman Dustin Malama told The Associated Press.

The cause of the crash is under investigation.

The Sentry Aloha drills have been temporarily suspended, the statement said.

Sentry Aloha began Dec. 5 and had been slated to run through Dec. 19. It is a large-scale fighter-jet exercise hosted by the Hawaii Air National Guard's 154th Wing, involving more than 800 personnel and 30 aircraft from nine states.

Eyewitnesses with information or video of the crash are being asked to contact the

Hawaii National Guard at 808-441-7000.

The British Hawker Hunter jet was developed for the Royal Air Force in the early 1950s and broke a world speed record of 727 mph in 1953.

Originally used as an air interceptor, the aircraft was later modified and re-equipped for ground attack and reconnaissance missions.

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MILITARY

Flu shots a tougher sell for civilians on base

By NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — Despite decades of studies showing its safety and effectiveness in preventing flu or reducing severity of the disease that killed more than 80,000 Americans last year, the influenza vaccine can be a tough sell among U.S. Army Europe civilians.

One bolted from the Vicenza Army Health Center recently when she saw the word “formaldehyde” on the paperwork, clinic workers said. Several more disappeared without explanation from the waiting room. Some have said they don’t need the vaccine because they never get the flu or they wash their hands a lot.

Some change their minds at the very last minute.

“I’m not feeling well,” one woman on Tuesday said before hustling out of the treatment room with her two toddlers, who’d just gotten their flu shots.

USAREUR schools and child care centers require flu shots for attendance.

Another woman, asked if she would be getting a shot after her daughter was vaccinated, said no. “I don’t do that,” she said.

“I don’t like to put anything like this into my body,” said a third, who got a flu shot only because her job required it. “If I live to be 80, load me up, but not now.”

Officials at Public Health Command-Europe said that they don’t have data on how many family members, civilians and retirees decline to get flu shots, which are urged by public health officials for almost everyone over age 6 months.

A University of Chicago study released this month showed that by mid-November, only 43 percent of adults received flu shots, and that the majority of those who hadn’t weren’t planning to. At most half of people aged 30 to 59



NANCY MONTGOMERY/Stars and Stripes

A girl watches her mother get a flu shot Monday at the Vicenza Army Health Clinic. Active-duty troops are required to get the shots, as are children at base schools and child care centers and workers there.

said they wouldn’t get vaccinated and half of those 18 to 29 said the same.

For active-duty troops, it’s a different story. Some 94 percent of U.S. Army Europe soldiers have gotten flu shots since the beginning of flu season in October, said Col. Kerry LeFrancis at Regional Health Command-Europe.

Seven bases this year participated in pandemic drills, inoculating thousands of soldiers within days or hours. Over four days in October, for example, more than 3,000 Vicenza soldiers were vaccinated, LeFrancis said.

An order rooted in WWI

The Army has required soldiers to get annual flu shots for decades, ever since a vaccine became available. That was partly

because of conditions particular to the military, such as close-quarters living and foreign deployments that can easily and rapidly spread the virus through a formation.

“We’ve always had to be more aware and in the vanguard,” said Col. Rodney Coldren, chief of preventive medicine services at Public Health Command-Europe.

There was also the historical lesson of the 1918 flu pandemic, he said.

The so-called Spanish flu got its start, according to one widely supported theory, at a U.S. Army camp in Kansas training troops to fight in World War I. It then spread with American troops across the Atlantic into the trenches and into civilian communities all over the globe.

The Spanish flu was the deadliest disease outbreak in human history. It killed at least 50 million people, dwarfing battle casualties of both world wars.

It sickened at least 26 percent of the Army — more than 1 million men — and killed almost 30,000 before they even got to France, according to a military report.

In June 1918, nearly 50,000 British troops were hospitalized in a single week. “Entire offensive operations ... had to be postponed due to the lack of sufficient numbers of functional soldiers,” according to an Australian military health journal.

“The Spanish flu demonstrated to us the significant impact that influenza can have on our ability to accomplish our mission,” Coldren said.

The best option

The flu vaccine isn’t perfect. Vaccine composition is determined months in advance based on which virus strains are circulating and how they might mutate.

“It’s a scientifically informed — I don’t want to say best — best informed idea of what will be circulating the following year,” Coldren said. “There will always be the potential for mismatch or that strains won’t be covered.”

Most years, the vaccines are between 40 and 60 percent effective. “That said, the best way to prevent influenza is still to get the shot,” Coldren said.

The public health command is currently doing a study to determine why people don’t get the shot, so they can better target that population. A higher percentage of vaccinations provides better protection throughout the community, he said.

Surveys in the U.S. have shown that many people who avoid the vaccine believe a variety of myths. It’s scientifically impossible to get the flu from the shot, for example.

It does not cause autism, a claim first attributed to a flawed and ultimately retracted 1998 study of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. It has since drawn repeated studies finding no support for the retracted study’s conclusions.

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Future USS Lyndon B. Johnson is launched

By CHRISTIAN LOPEZ
Stars and Stripes

The third and final Zumwalt-class destroyer was launched from General Dynamics Bath Iron Works in Maine, the Navy announced this week.

The destroyer, scheduled to be christened the USS Lyndon B. Johnson next year, now begins its final outfitting at the Maine shipyard.

The 610-foot-long ship, launched Sunday, has a stealth design, state-of-the-art electric propulsion system and wave-piercing tumblehome hull to help the Navy evolve with new systems and missions, according to a Navy statement Tuesday.

Launching a ship is the process of moving it from a land facility to a dry dock, which is then flooded until the ship is afloat, according to the statement.

“With the first two ships of the class underway, we are excited to continue the next phase of construction of the future Lyndon B. Johnson,” said Capt. Kevin Smith, DDG 1000 program manager for Program Executive Office Ships.



GENERAL DYNAMICS-BATH IRON/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

The future USS Lyndon B. Johnson is made ready before flooding of the dry dock at General Dynamics-Bath Iron Works shipyard over the weekend.

The USS Zumwalt, commissioned in October 2016, is the first and lead ship in the Zumwalt class.

The Johnson and its sister ships, the Zumwalt and the soon-to-be christened USS Michael Monsoor, are outfitted with the most advanced warfighting technology and weap-

onry available, which allow the Navy to perform sea control, power projection, deterrence, and command and control missions, the statement said.

“The crew of Lyndon B. Johnson looks forward to bringing this great warship honoring our 36th president to life, and we’re proud to have the opportunity to be present for this important step in the ship’s construction,” said Capt. Jeremy Gray, chosen to command the Lyndon B. Johnson. “It is truly impressive to see the ship afloat in the Kennebec River for the first time, and we look forward to taking her to sea.”

While the Johnson was prepared for its launch, the Monsoor on Saturday finally reached its homeport in San Diego. During acceptance trials in July, the main turbine engine needed to be replaced following damage to its turbine blades, according to U.S. Naval Institute News.

The Monsoor is set to be commissioned into the fleet next month.

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MILITARY

US warns Turkey over interference in Syria

BY UMAR FAROOQ
AND NABIH BULO
Los Angeles Times

BEIRUT — Turkey's plans to launch a military operation against U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters in northern Syria "within a matter of days" prompted warnings from the Pentagon and State Department on Wednesday.

Washington backs the Kurds with thousands of servicemembers, special forces and contractors who maintain a presence east of the Euphrates River, while Turkey and its coalition of Syrian rebels have mainly stayed to the west.

Turkey will target the east to "save the area from the separatist terrorist movement," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, using his routine term for Kurdish militias.

"Our target is never American soldiers, but members of the terrorist organization operating in the region. This is especially emphasized," Erdogan said in a televised speech from the capital, Ankara. "This step will allow for the path to a political solution to be opened and for healthier cooperation with the U.S."

Cmdr. Sean Robertson, a Pentagon spokesman, said such a



Erdogan

move would be "unacceptable" and would undermine shared interests in the border area.

"Unilateral military action into northeast Syria by any party, particularly as U.S. personnel may be present or in the vicinity, is of grave concern," Robertson said in a statement Wednesday evening.

Turkey has long protested Washington's support of the People's Protection Units, Kurdish militias also known as YPG. Turkey views the YPG as an extension of the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party, which has fought a decades-long guerrilla war

against Turkey.

Washington's support of the YPG has enabled its fighters to beat back the militant group Islamic State from much of its territory in northeastern Syria. The Kurds now control wide swaths of land, a development that has enraged Turkey and worsened a rift between Washington and Ankara — fellow NATO members and putative allies.

Since 2016, Erdogan has launched two operations to stop the Kurds from establishing what he called "a terror corridor" along the 511-mile Syrian-Turkish border. Working with Syrian rebel factions as his proxy, he has secured much of Syria's north.

But fears of armed clashes between Turkish troops and what the Pentagon says are approximately 2,000 servicemembers in Syria, as well as potentially thousands of contractors and special forces operatives, had so far stayed Erdogan's hand from attacking east of the Euphrates or in Manbij, a city some 15 miles southwest of the river.

Still, tensions have risen, with reports of Turkish forces shelling YPG positions even as the Pentagon doubled down on its support of the Kurds, who are struggling to finish off extremists in pockets

of territory near the Syria-Iraq border.

And over Ankara's objections, the U.S. has established observation posts in the northeast Syria border region. Defense Department spokesman Col. Robert Manning announced the posts in a news release this week, saying they were "to address the security concerns of our NATO ally Turkey."

"We take Turkish security concerns seriously and we are committed to coordinating our efforts with Turkey to bring stability to northeastern Syria," Manning said.

That did little to mollify Erdogan.

"It's clear that the purpose of these U.S. observation posts is not to protect our country from terrorists but to protect terrorists from Turkey," he said Wednesday.

He accused the U.S. of using ISIS' presence as a "stalling tactic" on an agreement over Manbij that began this month with joint U.S. and Turkish patrols around the city and would end with the YPG leaving Manbij and ceding it to Turkish stewardship by the end of the year.

"There is no threat (from ISIS) in Syria anymore. This is a fairy tale," said Erdogan.

He said Turkish soldiers could immediately clear the remaining extremists.

The scope of the operation Erdogan promised on Wednesday is still unclear, but Turkey's previous cross-border incursions into Syria involved special forces working alongside Syrian rebels, with Turkish aerial and artillery support clearing the way.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported Wednesday that rebel commanders had been told weeks ago to prepare for an assault, although representatives of a number of factions contacted the same day said there had been no orders to mobilize.

Hundreds of Turkish troops, along with tanks and armored vehicles, have massed near the border crossing at Akcakale, according to Can Acun, a researcher at the Ankara-based Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research.

Still, Acun did not expect to see military confrontation between Turkish and U.S. troops. Erdogan, he said, is focused on increasing pressure on the U.S. to stop aiding the Kurds.

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PACIFIC

Marines on Okinawa get jungle training

Engineers prepare for a pivot from desert fighting

By CARLOS M. VAZQUEZ II
Stars and Stripes

CAMP GONSALVES, Okinawa — Marines assigned to the 9th Engineering Support Battalion were exposed to a different type of battlefield setting than the U.S. has been involved in for the past quarter-century during recent drills at Okinawa's Jungle Warfare Training Center.

Engineers of four specialized companies camped out in the jungle and participated in a week-long exercise that began Dec. 2 and consisted of rappelling steep mountain terrain, patrolling, land navigation, rope work and other basic-to-intermediate jungle environment skills.

"We are here to learn the basics so that when we are called upon to operate across the Indo-Pacific area of operations, we are able to better accomplish our mission," Bravo Company commander Capt. Felipe Bayona told Stars and Stripes during the exercise. "If you are not exposed to at least a little bit to the environment that we are going to be operating in, then it will create extra friction and make it difficult to operate downrange."

Conflicts in the past 17 years have occurred mostly in desert terrain, Bayona said. Being on Okinawa allows him and his team to practice in a new arena to meet and overcome different challenges they are not used to enduring.

The training consisted of 165 Marines within the battalion, all with various job positions, practicing their skillsets and stepping outside their comfort zones.

"I've never done rappelling; I didn't get a chance to do it in boot camp," said Lance Cpl. Cesar Gonzalez. "For it being my first time, I'm a bit nervous but I'm excited about it and it looks fun."

Gonzalez, who has been a Marine for 19 months, grew up in San Antonio, Texas. The Jungle Warfare Training Center's vastly different environment adds another dimension to his experience, he said.

"This place right here allows us to focus solely on provisional infantry skills," said battalion commanding officer Lt. Col. Soulynamma Pharathikoune. "Here they get motivated again and [experience] something they normally don't get a chance to do."

The 9th Engineer Support Battalion provides expeditionary engineering support to the Marine Air Ground Task Force, including mobility, survivability, tactical utilities, fuel storage, bulk water production and explosive ordnance disposal, according to the Marines' official website.

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PHOTOS BY CARLOS M. VAZQUEZ II/Stars and Stripes

A Marine with the 9th Engineering Support Battalion rappels during an exercise at the Jungle Warfare Training Center in Okinawa on Dec. 4.



Marines with the 9th Engineering Support Battalion practice rappelling.



A Marine instructor shows off a jungle trap.



Marines assigned to the 9th Engineering Support Battalion take part in an exercise at the Jungle Warfare Training Center.

PACIFIC

Japan mulling new female training units

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japan's Self-Defense Forces are considering new female training units to accommodate an influx of female recruits that is expected to continue to climb in the coming years, Japanese media reported this week.

The island nation is finding it increasingly difficult to accept female recruits with its existing units stretched to capacity, the Jiji Press news agency reported, citing sources with knowledge of the deliberations.

As a result, the Self-Defense Forces are considering the addition of new units across the country to accommodate recruits in all three service branches.

Japanese defense officials did not respond to requests seeking comment this week.

The Maritime Self-Defense Force is considering a new training unit at its base in Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture, sometime between fiscal years 2019 and 2021, Jiji Press said. The JMSDF has requested just shy of \$6 million for fiscal 2019, which starts in April, to build female barracks there.

Of the four JMSDF recruit-

training bases, female training occurs only at Yokosuka in Kanagawa prefecture, Jiji said. That base was designed to accept about 120 female recruits in a typical year but this year that number rose to 219.

Its rolls are expected to surpass 240 in fiscal 2019, which is considered its absolute limit.

Once the Sasebo barracks are completed, the number of female recruits at Yokosuka is expected to drop to around 200 per year.

The Air Self-Defense Force conducts recruit training at its Kumagaya base in Saitama prefecture and Hofu Minami in Yamaguchi prefecture, Jiji reported. Women train only at Hofu Minami, but officials are considering expanding that training to Kumagaya.

The Ground Self-Defense Force mainly holds female recruit training at Camp Asaka in Saitama prefecture, Jiji said. It too is considering the formation of a new unit to relieve the pressure on Asaka, but further details were unavailable.

The Self-Defense Forces have gone from 144 female servicemembers in its inaugural year, 1954, to more than 15,000 as of March 2018, or 6.5 percent of the total force, according to its website. That number is up 1.6



COHEN YOUNG/Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

Female Japanese junior officers from the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force visit the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii, in June 2010.

percent since 2008 and continues to climb, the Defense Ministry's 2018 white paper added.

The ministry plans to eliminate quotas and raise the number of female servicemembers to more than 9 percent by 2030.

Some jobs in the Japan Self-Defense Forces have typically been closed to female servicemembers.

A new initiative in April 2017 expanded career options for women but JMSDF submarine duty, JGSDF biological and chemical weapon defense and JGSDF tunnel units are still closed to women due to the equipment used and the lack of compliance with the Maternal Health Act.

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First lady flies in Osprey on visit to carrier

Associated Press

HAMPTON, Va. — Melania Trump made history Wednesday by flying in a V-22 Osprey aircraft and onto the deck of an aircraft carrier.

The White House says it's the first time a first lady has flown in an Osprey. The tiltrotor aircraft takes off and lands vertically.

Trump flew from Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington to Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Hampton, Va., and onto the deck of the USS George H.W. Bush and back. She later tweeted about her "incredible flight" and visit with servicemembers.

In Virginia, Trump checked out the F-22 Raptor stealth fighter jet and addressed servicemembers, noting that many had recently returned from deployment.

"I'm honored to be able to say welcome home and thank you for answering the call of duty," she said. "I have said this before, but it's worth repeating. We know that we are free because you're brave. And I speak on behalf of my husband when I tell you we are forever grateful for your service."

The first lady exchanged high-fives with elementary schoolchildren and posed for selfies with some of those in military garb.

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*Above photo: 1st place 2017 Nature & Landscape winner, LCDR James Lish, Title: Okinawa Park Waterfall at Sunrise

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AFRICA

New Africa policy aims to counter Russia and China

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
AND JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Africa is a strategic battleground where countering China and Russia's growing influence will be the top U.S. priority, national security adviser John Bolton said Thursday as he unveiled the Trump administration's new approach on the continent.

"America's vision for the region is one of independence, self-reliance and growth — not dependency, domination and debt," Bolton said during a speech at the Heritage Foundation, a right-leaning think tank.

Bolton said the new strategy in Africa focuses on furthering American interests and priorities in the continent by encouraging economic opportunities with partner nations, the effective use of U.S. aid and peacekeeping efforts, and countering extremist groups such as Islamic State and al-Qaida by supporting regional government efforts to improve security and cooperation.

Echoing the Department of Defense's National Defense Strategy in naming China and Russia as "great power competitors," Bolton said those countries are focusing on Africa to expand their influence on the continent politically and financially as a way to "gain a competitive advantage over the United States."

One place competition in Africa is now unfolding is in the small but strategic country of Djibouti, where Beijing opened its first overseas military base in 2017. For the U.S. military, Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti has long been the anchor for missions around the volatile Horn of Africa and a launching pad into neighboring Somalia.

The United States has a lease to continue operating out of Camp Lemonnier until 2034, with the option for a 10-year extension. But China's growing military

presence, joined with an economic strategy that involves hefty local infrastructure investments and port deals, has been a source of U.S. military concerns.

One concern is the possibility of Djibouti handing over control of the Doraleh Container Terminal that sits on the Red Sea to Chinese state-owned companies. If it happens, the Horn of Africa's maritime trade region would lean in favor of China, Bolton said.

"And our U.S. military personnel at Camp Lemonnier could face even further challenges in their efforts to protect the American people," he said.

While much of the focus of the United States in Africa has centered recently on countering violent extremism and coordinating with local forces in impoverished countries such as Chad and Niger, Beijing has invested billions to finance mining ventures, telecommunications projects, port and infrastructure deals.

Bolton said those Chinese projects are "riddled with corruption" and don't meet the same standards as American projects. "China uses bribes, opaque agreements and the strategic use of debt to hold states in Africa captive to Beijing's wishes and demands," he said.

As part of the new strategy, they are pursuing an initiative called "Prosper Africa," which will focus on using American tax dollars in Africa to support economic opportunities that will "support U.S. investment across the continent, grow Africa's middle class and improve the overall business climate in the region," Bolton said.

They will also re-evaluate supporting United Nations peacekeeping missions to make certain the United States is only supporting "effective and efficient operations" and will "terminate missions that are unable to meet their own mandate or facilitate lasting peace."

struction, culture, command climate surveys and research into behavioral health issues associated with operations.

Thomas said the trend of misconduct cuts across all sectors of the special operations community.

"No component or command has escaped this trend and all of us will feel the disproportionate and negative impacts of these incidents on our missions and people," Thomas wrote.



Soldiers allied with Yemen's internationally recognized government fly the South Yemen flag at the port of Aden, Yemen, on Wednesday.

JOHN GAMBRELL/AP

Senate set to vote on ending US role in Yemeni conflict

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday cleared another procedural hurdle to consider legislation to end the U.S. military's support of the Saudi-led coalition in the war in Yemen, raising new pressure on the White House to redirect its efforts.

Senators voted 60 to 39 to approve a full floor debate in the upper chamber on a resolution to reverse U.S. support of the Saudis in the war-torn country that is on the brink of famine, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 85,000 children.

The Senate was expected to take up the matter late Thursday. If the measure receives final passage, the House could pick up the measure next year, but its fate there remains unclear. Also unclear was the full impact of a provision in a farm bill that could pass the House floor that attempts to limit resolutions objecting to the U.S. military's role in Yemen.

The U.S. military action in the four-year Yemen civil war is authorized under wide-ranging war powers legislation approved by Congress in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"The disastrous and bloody Saudi-led war in Yemen is supported by the United States," Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said ahead of Wednesday's procedural vote. "It is a humanitarian disaster."

The Senate vote, which comes two weeks after the upper chamber approved a procedural measure to allow Wednesday's move, increases pressure on the White House to re-evaluate its direction in Yemen, as well as push for a peaceful resolution in the country's ongoing civil war.

Earlier this month, senators met behind closed doors on Capitol Hill with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who urged the lawmakers to thwart efforts to move forward with the resolution.

"Today the U.S. Senate will vote

Combatants agree to talks

Associated Press

RIMBO, Sweden — The United Nations secretary general on Thursday announced that Yemen's warring sides have agreed after weeklong peace talks in Sweden to a provincewide cease-fire in Hodeida and a withdrawal of troops from the contested Red Sea port city.

Antonio Guterres thanked the Yemeni delegations for what he called "an important step" and "real progress toward future talks to end the conflict" and also said that the next round of talks is planned for the end of January.

The brutal 4-year-old civil war pits the internationally

recognized Yemeni government, supported by a Saudi-led coalition, against the Iran-backed rebels known as Houthis.

The fighting has produced one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with 22 million of Yemen's 29 million people in need of aid, according to the United Nations. The two sides have for months been locked in a stalemate fought over Hodeida.

"This is just the beginning," Guterres said, speaking at the closing ceremony for the talks in the Swedish town of Rimbo. He thanked the Yemeni parties "for coming here to discuss a better future for Yemen."

on whether to end US support for the devastating Saudi-led war in Yemen," Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., a resolution sponsor, wrote on Twitter. "This would be the first time ever that the Senate has voted to end an unauthorized war. We must finally end US involvement in this humanitarian and strategic disaster."

Sanders and Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., along with Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, introduced Joint Resolution 54 in March, forcing a vote for the first time on the matter, though in the midst of broader support of the operation. As a result, the resolution was effectively rejected in a 55 to 44 vote, largely along party lines with Republicans voting against.

But since that time, support for Saudi Arabia has diminished, especially in light of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi's slaying at the country's consulate in Turkey and concerns of a subsequent, apparent coverup led by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Khashoggi, a Virginia resident, was killed after he visited the

Saudi consulate in Turkey, followed by reports of recordings and other intelligence detailing his brutal murder at the hands of several Saudi officials.

President Donald Trump's comments about Khashoggi's death have also fueled concerns, since he's sided against U.S. intelligence reports confirming the Saudi crown prince directed the killing. Pompeo and Mattis have also aligned with Trump's view of the intelligence.

U.S. forces have provided support for Saudi Arabia and the Yemen government in their fight against Iran-backed Houthi rebels, which some lawmakers contend the U.S. military has not been given proper authority to do. The U.S. forces have assisted in coordinating, refueling and providing target guidance and intelligence to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Earlier this month, Mattis and Pompeo told senators in a private meeting the United States was at a critical juncture in the Yemen confrontation and couldn't afford to withdraw right now.

Misconduct: Review scheduled

FROM FRONT PAGE

"Correcting this trend will take committed leadership at all levels of our command and personal moral courage by all," Thomas wrote.

On Jan. 1, SOCOM will launch a 90-day internal review, which will require officers O-5 and above to get more involved with their troops, according to Thomas' message, which was first reported on by Newsweek. The review also includes a look at in-

NATION



Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's former lawyer, leaves federal court after his sentencing in New York on Wednesday.

Probe draws closer to Trump as 2 powerful protectors abandon him

Associated Press

NEW YORK — President Donald Trump has now been abandoned by two of his most powerful protectors, his longtime lawyer and the company that owns the National Enquirer tabloid, bringing a perilous investigation into his campaign one step closer to the Oval Office.

Both Michael Cohen and American Media Inc. now say they made hush-money payments to a porn star and a Playboy Playmate for the purposes of helping his 2016 White House bid, a campaign finance violation. The women alluded to the payments in court, and federal prosecutors say the payments were made at Trump's direction.

The admissions by Cohen and AMI conflict with Trump's evolving explanations. Since the spring, Trump has gone from denying knowledge of any payments to saying they would have been private transactions that weren't illegal.

On Twitter on Thursday, Trump contended he "never directed" his former personal lawyer to break the law. He tweeted that Cohen "was a lawyer and he is supposed to know the law."

Cohen pleaded guilty to campaign finance charges "in order to embarrass the president and get a much reduced prison sentence," Trump tweeted. He said the charges were "unrelated to me."

Though prosecutors have implicated Trump in a crime, they haven't directly accused him, and it's not clear that they could bring charges against a sitting president because of Trump's immunity as chief of Justice Department protocol.

Nonetheless, Trump's changing explanations have clouded the public understanding of what occurred and are running head-on into facts agreed to by prosecutors, AMI and Cohen, who pleaded guilty to campaign finance violations and other crimes and was sentenced on Wednesday.

"You now have a second defendant or group of defendants saying that these payments were made for the primary purpose of influencing the election, and that it was done in coordination with Trump and his campaign," said Rick Hasen, an election law expert at the University of California, Irvine.

Trump's first explanation of the

payment that would eventually help lead Cohen to a three-year prison sentence came at 35,000 feet over West Virginia.

Returning to Washington on Air Force One, Trump on April 6 for the first time answered questions about the reports of \$130,000 in hush money paid to porn star Stormy Daniels, issuing a denial to reporters while saying they would "have to ask Michael Cohen."

Three days later, the FBI raided Cohen's office, seizing records on topics including the payment to Daniels. Furious, Trump called the raid a "disgrace" and said the FBI "broke into" his lawyer's office. He also tweeted that "Attorney-client privilege is dead!"

The raid was overseen by the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan and arose from a referral from special counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russian election interference. At the time, Cohen said he took out a personal line of credit on his home to pay Daniels days before the 2016 election without Trump's knowledge.

In May, Trump and his attorneys began saying Cohen received a monthly retainer from which he made payments for nondisclosure agreements like the one with Daniels. In a series of tweets, Trump said those agreements are "very common among celebrities and people of wealth" and "this was a private agreement."

People familiar with the investigation say Cohen secretly recorded Trump discussing a potential payment for former Playboy Playmate Karen McDougal two months before the election. On the tape, Cohen is heard saying that he needed to start a company "for the transfer of all of that info regarding our friend David," a possible reference to David Pecker, Trump's friend and president of AMI.

When Cohen began to discuss financing, Trump interrupted him and asked, "What financing?"

"We'll have to pay," Cohen responded.

Prosecutors announced Wednesday that AMI acknowledged making one of those payments "in concert" with the Trump campaign to protect him from a story that could have hurt his candidacy. The company agreed to prosecution under a deal with prosecutors.

Trump, top Dems dig in on border wall funding

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congressional leaders are digging in for a fight over government funding after Tuesday's combative White House meeting with President Donald Trump that seemed to raise the likelihood of a partial government shutdown.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Trump was holding parts of the government "hostage to a petty campaign pledge" to build a border wall with Mexico in order to "fire up" his political base.

Republican leaders, meanwhile, said they have the votes in the House to approve Trump's request for \$5 billion for the southern border wall in a must-pass spending bill — but weren't sure they wanted to bring it up with no assurance that the plan could get the necessary 60 votes in the Senate.

The burden "is on the Senate to negotiate what they can get with 60 votes," said Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., a member of House leadership and a key vote counter.

It is my hope and it's my thought that the Senate should think this thing out," McHenry said.

That appeared unlikely Wednesday, as Democrats reiterated their opposition to spending more than \$1.6 billion on border security and Republicans urged Trump to remain steadfast.

"This is a fight we're going to have. He needs to dig in and not give in," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a key Trump ally.

Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., said House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi appeared to be calling the shots for Democrats, "and she's not going to make any conces-



ANDREW HARRIN/AP

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., exit the White House to speak to the media Tuesday after meeting with President Donald Trump.

sions because she wants to be the next speaker."

The funding fight is something leaders of both parties had hoped to avoid as Congress seeks to wrap up its work for the year and adjourn for the holidays. But Trump, who for months had suggested he'd be willing to force a shutdown over wall funding, dashed hopes for a quick resolution on Tuesday, sparring with Pelosi and Schumer during an extraordinary Oval Office meeting that he made sure played out in front of television cameras.

Trump told the Democrats he will be "proud to shut down the

government" in the name of border security, declaring: "I will take the mantle. I will be the one to shut it down."

Schumer said the American people will "suffer needlessly" if Trump follows through on his threat to shut down parts of the government as of Dec. 21 unless he receives the \$5 billion he is demanding.

If the two sides do not make a deal by that date, about one-quarter of the government will be affected, including the departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, Agriculture, State and Justice, as well as national parks.

Pledge to limit tenure as speaker wins over critics of Pelosi in her own party

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rep. Nancy Pelosi all but ensured that she will become House speaker next month, quelling a revolt by disgruntled younger Democrats by agreeing to limit her tenure to no more than four additional years in the chamber's top post.

Within moments of announcing Wednesday she would restrict her time in the job, seven of her critics distributed a statement promising to back the California Democrat. Democrats widely agreed that the pledge meant Pelosi had clinched a comeback to the post she held from 2007 until January 2011, the last time her party ran the House and the first time the speaker was a woman.

Wednesday's accord gives Pelosi a clear path to becoming

the most powerful Democrat in government and a leading role in confronting President Donald Trump during the upcoming 2020 presidential and congressional campaigns. It moves a 78-year-old white woman to the cusp of steering next year's diverse crop of House Democrats, with its large number of female, minority and younger members.

The agreement also ends what's been a distracting, harsh leadership fight among Democrats that has been waged since Election Day, when they gained at least 39 seats and grabbed House control for the next Congress. It was their biggest gain of House seats since the 1974 post-Watergate election.

Democrats have been hoping to train public attention on their 2019 agenda focusing on health care, jobs and wages, and building

infrastructure projects. They also envision investigations of Trump, his 2016 presidential campaign and his administration.

To line up support, Pelosi initially resorted to full-court lobbying by congressional allies, outside Democratic luminaries, and liberal and labor organizations. She cut deals with individual lawmakers for committee assignments and roles leading legislative efforts.

But in the end, she had to make concessions about her tenure to make sure she'll win a majority — likely 218 votes — when the new House convenes Jan. 3. Democrats are likely to have 235 seats, meaning she could spare only 17 defections and still prevail if, as expected, Republicans all oppose her.

NATION

Insurance claims at \$9B from California wildfires

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Insurance claims from last month's California wildfires already are at \$9 billion and expected to increase, the state's insurance commissioner announced Wednesday.

About \$7 billion in claims are from the Camp Fire that destroyed the Northern California city of Paradise and killed at least 86 people, making it the deadliest U.S. wildfire in at least a century. The rest is from the Woolsey and Hill fires in Southern California.

Collectively, the fires destroyed or damaged more than 20,000 structures, with the vast majority in and around Paradise. On Tuesday, state and federal authorities estimated it will cost at least \$3 billion just to clear debris.

"As the claims get perfected, as individuals get access to their former homes and neighborhoods, as they dialogue with their insurance companies and share more information about the scope of their loss, we expect these numbers to rise," Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones said of the \$9 billion estimate.

There are more than 28,000 claims for residential personal property, nearly 2,000 from commercial property and 9,400 in auto and other claims for the fires.

That's well above the number of claims filed following a series of fires that tore through Northern California's wine country last year. Losses from those fires were initially pegged at \$3.3 billion but eventually grew to \$10 billion.

While the Camp Fire destroyed about twice as many structures as the 2017 fires, home values in Butte County are far lower than those in Sonoma County. That's part of the reason total claims may seem low compared with the 2017 figures, Jones said.

Jones said his time for California to start rethinking how and if it builds in fire-prone areas. Ken Pimlott, outgoing director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, told The Associated Press this week the state should consider banning construction in vulnerable areas.

Jones said local governments may not be fully considering the long-term impacts of building in areas at high risk of fire, floods and rising sea levels.

"That's going to be a hard

conversation. Everybody likes to build new; people obviously want to rebuild their communities," he said. "We're in a new era where these risks are so bad I think we've really got to take a look at how we're making these decisions."

The cleanup costs for last month's fires will far surpass the record expense of \$1.3 billion the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers spent on debris removal in Northern California in 2017.

California Office of Emergency Services Director Mark Ghilar-ducci said the state will manage cleanup contracts this time. Last year, hundreds of Northern California homeowners complained that contractors paid by the ton hauled away too much dirt and damaged unbroken driveways, sidewalks and pipes.

Ghilarducci said the state OES will hire auditors and monitors to watch over debris removal in hopes of cutting down on the number of over-eager contractors.

Cleanup is expected to begin in January and take about a year to complete. State and federal officials are currently removing hazardous household materials from the damaged properties.

New clues, no answers in Cuba 'health attacks'

Associated Press

MIAMI — American diplomats affected by mysterious health incidents in Cuba showed damage in the inner ear shortly after they complained of weird noises and sensations, according to their earliest medical exams, published Wednesday.

The detailed findings were published in a medical journal nearly two years after what the U.S. calls "health attacks" began — and they shed no new light on a possible culprit.

"What caused it, who did it, why it was done — we don't know any of those things," said Dr. Michael Hoffer, of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, who led the exams.

The U.S. says that since late 2016, 26 people associated with the embassy in Havana suffered problems that include dizziness, ear pain and ringing, and cognitive problems such as difficulty thinking — a health mystery that has damaged U.S.-Cuba relations. Cuba has adamantly denied any involvement.

The Miami researchers examined 25 of those people, who reported hearing a piercing noise or experiencing a sensation of pressure before their symptoms began. The patients failed a variety of tests that detect inner-ear problems associated with balance, what's called the vestibular



LYNNE SLADKY/AP

Dr. Michael Hoffer, of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, speaks during a news conference in Miami on Wednesday.

system — although there were no pre-symptom medical records to compare.

Testing of 10 other people who were in the same building at the time of the incidents found they were fine. Hoffer reported in the journal *Laryngoscope Investigative Otolaryngology*. Hoffer also traveled to Cuba to check 100 other Americans stationed there, who also turned out to be healthy.

Those inner-ear balance problems have been central to the government's ongoing health investigation.

Earlier this year, a team of doctors at the University of Pennsylvania also examined many of these patients, but months later reported they suffered a concussion-like brain injury despite no blow to the head.

Report: Iranian hackers targeted emails related to US sanctions

By RAPHAEL SATTER

Associated Press

LONDON — As President Donald Trump reimposed harsh economic sanctions on Iran last month, hackers scrambled to break into personal emails of American officials tasked with enforcing them, The Associated Press has found — another sign of how deeply cyberespionage is embedded into the fabric of U.S.-Iranian relations.

The AP drew on data gathered by the London-based cybersecurity group Certia to track how a hacking group often nicknamed Charming Kitten spent the past month trying to break into the private emails of more than a dozen U.S. Treasury officials.

Also on the hackers' hit list: high-profile defenders, detractors and enforcers of the nuclear deal struck between Washington and Tehran, as well as Arab atomic scientists, Iranian civil society figures and D.C. think tank employees.

"Presumably, some of this is about figuring out what is going on with sanctions," said Frederick Kagan, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute who has written about Iranian cyberespionage and was among those targeted.

Kagan said he was alarmed by the targeting of foreign nuclear experts.

"This is a little more worrisome



RAPHAEL SATTER/AP

Certia cybersecurity researchers Nariman Gharib, left, and Armin Sabeti look at a computer at a cafe in London on Dec. 7.

than I would have expected," he said.

The hit list surfaced after Charming Kitten mistakenly left one of its servers open to the internet last month. Researchers at Certia found the server and extracted a list of 77 Gmail and Yahoo addresses targeted by the hackers that they handed to the AP for further analysis. Although those addresses likely represent only a fraction of the hackers' overall effort — and it's not

clear how many of the accounts were successfully compromised — they still provide considerable insight into Tehran's espionage priorities.

"The targets are very specific," Certia researcher Nariman Gharib said.

In a report published Thursday, Certia tied the hackers to the Iranian government, a judgment drawn in part on operational blunders, including a couple of cases where the hackers appeared to

have accidentally revealed that they were operating from computers inside Iran.

The assessment was backed by others who have tracked Charming Kitten.

Allison Wikoff, a researcher with Atlanta-based Secureworks, recognized some of the digital infrastructure in Certia's report and said the hackers' past operations left little doubt that they were government-backed.

Iran has previously denied responsibility for hacking operations, but an AP analysis of its targets suggests that Charming Kitten is working in close alignment with the Islamic Republic's interests. The most striking among them were the nuclear officials — a scientist working on a civilian nuclear project for Pakistan's Ministry of Defense, a senior operator at the Research and Training Reactor in the Jordanian city of Ramtha, and a high-ranking researcher at the Atomic Energy Commission of Syria.

The report suggested a general interest in nuclear technology and administration.

Others on the hit list — such as Guy Roberts, the U.S. assistant secretary of defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs — pointed to an eagerness to keep track of officials charged with overseeing America's nuclear arsenal.

Still more targets are connect-

ed to the Iran deal — a 2015 pact negotiated by former President Barack Obama's administration and other world powers that called for Tehran to curb its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions. Trump tore up the deal in May over the objections of most of America's allies and has reimposed a series of punishing restrictions on Iran since.

Jarrett Blanc, a U.S. State Department official involved in the implementation of the nuclear deal under Obama, was also on the list. He said news of his targeting was no shock.

"I've retained contact with Iranian counterparts since leaving government," he said. "I'd be very surprised if there were no Iranian groups trying to hack into my various email accounts."

Like the Russian hackers who have chased after America's drone, space and submarine secrets, the list indicates that Iranian spies were also interested in the world of U.S. defense companies.

One of those targeted is a senior director of "breakthrough technology" at the aerospace arm of Honeywell International Inc., the New Jersey-based industrial conglomerate; another is a vice president at Virginia-based Science Applications International Corp., a prominent Pentagon contractor.

NATION

Hawaii's Gabbard considering 2020 run for president

By JOHN WAGNER
The Washington Post

Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii, who has made recent trips to Iowa and New Hampshire, confirmed Wednesday night that she is "seriously considering" a 2020 White House bid.

Gabbard, 37, considered a rising star in the Democratic Party, was one of the first female combat veterans to join Congress and was a high-profile supporter of the 2016 presidential bid of Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.

During an appearance on MSNBC's "Hardball" Wednesday night, Gabbard was asked if she is planning to run for president, an office recently held by another politician with roots in Hawaii, former president Barack Obama. "I'm seriously considering it," Gabbard said, adding, "I'm concerned about the direction of the country."

Pressed by host Chris Matthews on what might stop her, Gabbard said: "I don't know. I'm thinking through it very carefully."

If Gabbard moves forward with a presidential bid, she will join what is expected to be a crowded Democratic field, possibly including Sanders, who is looking at an-

other White House run.

While in New Hampshire earlier this month, Gabbard brushed off a question about whether Sanders' plans would have an impact on her decision, according to the Honolulu Star-Advertiser.

"I think you'll have to ask him about what his plans are," she said. "I'm thinking through how I can best be of service to our country."

During stops in New Hampshire, Gabbard reportedly highlighted her support for a single-payer, Medicare-for-all health care bill and her efforts to reduce the influence of money in politics, among other policies.

Gabbard was first elected to the House in 2012, becoming the first Hindu member of Congress.

She served in a field medical unit of the Hawaii Army National Guard in a combat zone in Iraq from 2004 to 2005 and was deployed to Kuwait from 2008 to 2009.

She previously served as vice chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, a position she left in 2016 when she announced her support for Sanders for the Democratic presidential nomination over Hillary Clinton.



GABRIELLE BANKS, HOUSTON CHRONICLE/AP

Carlos and Jemima Guimaraes stand outside the Bob Casey Federal courthouse in Houston after they were sentenced to federal prison.

Brazilian couple sentenced for abduction of grandson

Associated Press

HOUSTON — A wealthy Brazilian couple were sentenced Wednesday to minimal U.S. prison terms for helping their daughter keep her son in Brazil for the past five years in violation of the terms of her divorce from the boy's American father.

Carlos Guimaraes, 68, was sentenced in Houston federal court to three months in prison while his wife, Jemima Guimaraes, 66, received a one-month term. The couple told the judge they were

only helping their daughter because they believed she was a victim of domestic abuse.

Prosecutors allege that the couple helped their daughter, Marcelle Guimaraes, keep her son in Brazil after she took him there in 2013 and failed to return to the U.S.

They were arrested in February after flying to Miami. Marcelle Guimaraes, who was also indicted in the case, is a fugitive and remains in Brazil with her 9-year-old son, Nico.



MATT YORK/AP

Joseph Soldwedel, the publisher of the Prescott Daily Courier, poses for a photo in Phoenix in November. Soldwedel and his wife, Felice, are locked in a nasty divorce dispute.

News ethics questioned in ugly Arizona divorce spat

By FELICIA FONSECA
Associated Press

PRESCOTT, Ariz. — An award-winning Arizona newspaper publisher and his wife are locked in a bizarre divorce case that has morphed into something more a journalism ethics saga.

Joseph Soldwedel has accused his wife, Felice, in a lawsuit of trying to kill him by poisoning him, and detailed the allegations in one of the small-town newspapers he owns, the 13,000-circulation Prescott Daily Courier.

None of the three news stories in the paper named his wife. But the Courier ran an ad accusing her by name, with a photo of her bordered with images of skulls and rats. The ad said she had an unnamed accomplice, and it offered a \$10,000 reward for tips.

Soldwedel's wife of eight years calls the poisoning claims ludicrous and says he is retaliating against her for seeking a divorce.

"I've had people call me, text me, 'Felice, is that you in the paper?' Oh my god," she told The Associated Press. "It almost makes you feel like you want to leave town. He made me look like this horrible person."

The lawsuit alleging poisoning seeks \$18 million from Felice Soldwedel and was filed a week after a prosecutor said there was no evidence of a crime



Felice Soldwedel

and declined to file charges.

"It's highly problematic for a publisher to be using the editorial resources of the paper to pursue a personal vendetta," said Edward Wasserman, dean of the graduate journalism school at the University of California, Berkeley. "The whole thing is pretty bizarre because someone who is not the publisher would not get that kind of attention, absent law enforcement taking it seriously."

Soldwedel said the coverage was proper and he wanted to ensure law enforcement thoroughly investigates his claims. The Prescott paper did not run a story about the police investigation clearing his wife, he said, because "we don't think it's concluded."

"I'm hoping to get her into court and to get it into trial and bring up enough evidence to the surface that police could not ignore it," he told the AP.

Soldwedel's father built Western News and Info Inc. by buying small newspapers across Arizona. Joseph Soldwedel, now 66, delivered newspapers as a boy and at 23 became publisher of a paper in the chain. He has run the chain in the 1960s to about 300,000 following enactment of the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Jaime Pinkham, executive director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, said in a statement that he was "grateful Congress worked in a bipartisan manner to give us the local flexibility to protect the

Bill removes protections for sea lions

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Congress has agreed to make it easier to kill sea lions threatening fragile runs of salmon in the Northwest.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reported that a bill approved by the House on Tuesday changes the Marine Mammal Protection Act to lift some of the restrictions on killing sea lions to protect salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River and its tributaries. The measure had previously passed the Senate.

Wildlife managers said sea lion populations have grown so large that they no longer need all the protections that were put in place for them in 1972.

The measure would usher in a more streamlined process for

Washington, Idaho, Oregon and several Pacific Northwest tribes to capture and euthanize sea lions. Sea lions deemed to be a problem are captured and euthanized.

Supporters, including the governors of Oregon, Washington and Idaho, fishing groups and tribes, have said the bill will give wildlife managers greater flexibility in controlling California sea lions that dramatically increased from about 30,000 in the 1960s to about 300,000 following enactment of the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Jaime Pinkham, executive director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, said in a statement that he was "grateful Congress worked in a bipartisan manner to give us the local flexibility to protect the

tribal treaty resources we share with others in the Columbia and Willamette rivers."

Critics called the move by Congress ill-conceived and say it will not solve the problem of declining salmon, which also face other problems such as habitat loss and dams.

While there are several thousand California sea lions in the Columbia River estuary, only about 200 to 300 swim more than 100 miles upriver from the Pacific Ocean and would be eligible for removal, state wildlife officials say.

An orca task force convened by Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, a Democrat, also backed the legislation to boost the fish for the struggling population of southern resident killer whales.

NATION

Missing father found buried in basement

By KYLE SWENSON
The Washington Post

In the basement of Michael Carroll's childhood home in Lake Grove on Long Island, the psychic pointed to the cement floor.

"[H]e went to the right spot and said, 'The energy is here,'" Michael told the New York Post in November.

Michael was not sure he bought it. As he would explain later, he was a science guy — a respiratory therapist. But he knew the house held its own secrets. As fanciful as the clairvoyant's premonition might sound, the otherworldly vibes would prove to be spot on.

Six feet below the basement floor of the suburban house was the answer to a family mystery that had been haunting Michael and his three siblings for decades. In 1961, when Michael was just 8 months old, his father, George Carroll, vanished. After decades of rumors and speculation, consultations with psychics and paranormal investigators, Michael — who had purchased the home from his mother before her death in 1998 — cracked into the basement floor himself about three years ago.

On Oct. 30, Michael and his two grown sons discovered a full skeleton. This week, Suffolk County

officials announced the body did belong to George Carroll, Newsday reported.

"I took a chance. I could have done this whole thing and found nothing, and then I would have had a whole messed-up basement," Michael told the New York Post in November.

"I have a messed-up basement. But I'm really glad we found what we found. It puts my family at ease."

But the identification solves only one half of the family's puzzle. According to the Suffolk County Medical Examiner, George was murdered, the victim of blunt-force trauma to the head. A missing father is now a homicide investigation.

"There's so many open ends here," Michael told News 12. "There's a story behind the story behind the story."

Time traveled back to 1961. Korean War veteran George Carroll lived in a small cottage on an isolated wooded road called Olive Street with his wife, Dorothy, and four kids — Patricia, 9, Jean, 7,

Steven, 5, and Michael, 8 months.

Then, George was gone. Dorothy would only say he walked out one day and never returned.

"It wasn't really much talked about, but we became curious as adults as to where he might be," Michael's older brother Steven told New York's NBC 4 in November.

"I was always told, 'Don't ask,'" Michael told the New York Post. "So I stopped asking."

Rumors replaced facts for the Carroll kids when it came to their father. According to Newsday, some family members said George had run away to return to Korea. Others suggested he was killed — and buried in the basement. The area was under construction around the time he went missing.

Not long after George disappeared, a man named Richard Darruss moved into the Olive Street home. He eventually married Dorothy, and they had a son together. As the Carroll kids grew up, Newsday reported, Darruss and Dorothy divorced in the early 1980s, and Darruss moved to a Mexican city near the Texas border. He passed away earlier this year, according to the paper.

Michael eventually uncovered his childhood home. Additions were constructed onto the original cot-

tage. Olive Street filled up with new houses.

But Michael still wondered about his missing father. Living now in the house where he grew up, he also was reminded of the old rumors about what might be under the basement. He called in a psychic and a team of paranormal investigators, he told the New York Post. Three years ago, he started digging.

He worked alone. As Michael told Newsday, he eventually used ground-penetrating radar to analyze the basement floor. The reading indicated something six feet below. The project went in fits and starts. At one point earlier this year, Michael was afraid he would upset the foundation of the whole house. But he kept going. This past summer, when he was felled by a stroke, he had his two grown sons take over.

"I told my kids, 'Guys come on over here and help me out. You've been watching me do this; you get in there,'" he told News 12. "I think they felt bad for me because they knew this was important to me."

On Oct. 30, one of his sons trudged upstairs to tell Michael there was something he should see.

"It's not easy for me to get up and down the stairs," he said.

"I actually did get into the hole where they were digging."

Michael recognized human remains.

"I felt total peace," he said. "I felt vindication for my dad. I felt like he was dancing in heaven."

The next day, after informing his family, Michael reported the find to authorities — on Halloween.

"The DNA was extremely well-preserved within the skeletal remains, even after almost 60 years," Suffolk County Medical Examiner Michael Caplan told Newsday on Wednesday. With this week's positive identification, Carroll says his family would like to enter his father in a graveyard with the full honor of a combat veteran.

Authorities continue to investigate the homicide. Suffolk County police say no one ever filed a missing person's report about George's 1961 disappearance. Law enforcement has also indicated they would have liked to interview the deceased Darruss, Dorothy's second husband. The Carroll children, however, say they don't want to speculate or theorize about how George ended up where he did.

"I feel great that my dad is finally free from that crappy hole," Michael said.



Michael Carroll

3 found alive in W.Va. coal mine

By ANTONIA NOORI FARZAN
The Washington Post

Jobs are hard to come by in the mountains of southern West Virginia, where closed-up coal mines scar the landscape. So when four people ranging in age from 21 to 43 became trapped in an abandoned mine near the small town of Clear Creek over the weekend, their family members had an inkling of what they might have been doing there.

"The reason they're in there is to get copper," Randy Williams, whose daughter, Kayla, was among the missing, said in a Tuesday interview with ABC News. "It's worth money . . . A couple years ago it was up to almost \$4 a pound. You could go into a mine and make \$1,000 a day."

For five days, Williams and others in the close-knit Appalachian community held their breaths as they waited to see if their friends and family members would make it out.

On Monday, Eddie Williams, 43, managed to escape on his own. Then, just before 7 p.m. on Wednesday, West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice announced that Kayla Williams, 25; Erica Treadway, 31; and Cody Bevery, 21, had been located alive and were being transported to a nearby hospital.

"This is an outcome that I really, truly, in my heart didn't think would happen," the Republican governor told reporters, calling the rescue "a Christmas

blessing."

The four appear to have entered the mine early Saturday morning. At some point before daybreak, a man who lives near the Rock House Powellton coal mine noticed a four-wheeler driving up the mountain, Raleigh County Sheriff Scott Van Meter told the Register-Herald.

The people in the ATV left their car parked along the side of the road, and by Saturday night it hadn't moved. Concerned, the man called the authorities, who began searching the area. When they found the abandoned ATV parked outside the entrance to the mine Sunday morning, they knew that there was a good chance that someone was trapped inside the mine, which has gone unused for the past two years.

Rescuers from the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training arrived later that day as the area was hit by a winter storm that closed down schools and government offices.

On Monday morning, Justice announced that snow and rough terrain had blocked the rescue team from accessing the entrance to the mine. The rescuers had tried an alternative entrance, but water that had pooled inside the mine prevented them from going any further.

Tensions were running high at the community center in the town of Whitesville, where family members had gathered to wait for updates. Coffee cups were scat-

tered across the folding tables and a Christmas tree topped with a gold bow did little to lighten the mood.

Whitesville is home to the Upper Big Branch Miners Memorial, which honors 29 people who died in a 2010 explosion. Just about anyone in the area would have known that without ventilation systems running, oxygen levels inside abandoned mines can be dangerously low.

No one knew how much food and water the four had been carrying, and some feared that they had gotten separated in the dark. Camella Williams, the sister of Kayla Williams, told WVS that locals wished they could take matters into their own hands.

"Everyone here is a coal miner, and there's not one person here who wouldn't walk into that mine right now and search for all of them if they would let us in," she said.

On Monday night, they got a glimmer of hope: Williams, the oldest member of the group, had managed to escape from the mine. The other three were still alive, he reported, and had enough snacks and water to survive for a few days. Using a map, he showed rescuers where to find them.

On Wednesday night, the packed community center erupted in cheers when the phone came in. Family members clapped their hands, jumped in the air, and broke down in tears.



COURTESY OF U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION/AP

Some of the 70 hair rollers with live finches hidden inside that were found Saturday at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport are displayed.

US Customs finds 70 finches packed inside hair rollers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Customs officials at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport say they found 70 live finches hidden inside hair rollers.

Authorities said a passenger arriving from Guyana on Saturday had the songbirds in a duffel bag.

The New York Times reported that officials believe the birds were brought to the U.S. to participate in singing contests. Customs officials say people bet on how

many times the finches chirp, and a winning male finch can sell for up to \$10,000.

The birds were turned over to veterinarians of the U.S. Agriculture Department, and the passenger was sent back to Guyana.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection says bird smuggling could threaten agriculture through the possible spread of diseases such as bird flu.

Customs officers have seized about 184 finches this year.

NATION

Air Force base secretary admits faking overtime

By PETER DUJARDIN
The Virginian-Pilot

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. — A former employee at Langley Air Force Base admitted Wednesday that she billed the federal government out of \$1.46 million — mainly by faking the amount of overtime she worked over 17 years.

Michelle M. Holt, 52, was a civilian secretary at the base, where she worked in the communications support squadron of Air Combat Command.

She pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Newport News to felony charges that she undertook a long-running effort to boost her own pay.

Between December 2001 and July 2018, Holt falsely claimed 42,847 overtime hours that she didn't work, according to a statement of facts that Holt, her lawyer and prosecutors signed off on Wednesday as part of the plea deal.

The case began slowly at first. In late 2001, Holt used a co-worker's log-in information — without that co-worker's knowledge — to get into a Department of Defense computerized pay database. She retroactively added 15 hours of overtime to her paycheck.

As time went on, Holt's retro-

active additions to her overtime "became a regular occurrence," the statement said. She began to get bolder, particularly after 2008 — when her overtime pay began to double her regular salary.

In 2017, for example, Holt's salary was \$51,324, but she took home \$119,585 in overtime pay.

In one two-week period, the statement said, she billed the Air Force for 137 overtime hours that she didn't work. Though overtime was by far the bulk of the scheme, she also falsified holiday and sick pay.

Things began to unravel in June when the Department of Defense's Inspector General's Office found discrepancies between Holt's pay and attendance records.

She appeared to get wind that an investigation was afoot.

In Wednesday's plea agreement, Holt admitted to both charges she faced — computer fraud and theft of government property. When she is sentenced March 13 by U.S. District Judge Raymond Jackson, she faces up to 15 years in prison, plus fines and forfeitures.

In the plea agreement, prosecutors promised to ask Jackson to give Holt credit for cooperating with them.

Late Sen. McCain and Sen. Reed get bipartisan leadership award

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The late Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain and Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, were honored Wednesday with the 2018 Javits Prize for Bipartisan Leadership at a Capitol Hill event.

"These two incredible patriots really stood together," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.

McCain, the longtime chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, died Aug. 25 after a 13-month battle with brain cancer. His final year was a political tour de force, railing against President Donald Trump's nationalist policies, defense budget cuts, wasteful Pentagon spending, a murky shift in war strategy and the noncombat deaths of servicemembers.

Klobuchar said she misses McCain "every day."

In her final visit with him, Klobuchar said he struggled to speak, but he pointed out a line in a book that read, "There's nothing in life more liberating than fighting for a cause greater than yourself." It was a theme that could be final words for everyone, she said.

Outgoing Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., recalled McCain's courage and passion. He told about the time that McCain told him he had a "fun" idea to form a "Gang of Eight" to focus on immigration reform.

"He lied," Flake said to laughter. "It was rewarding and great, but it wasn't much fun."

Ben Domenech, a conservative writer who is married to the late



JOE GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., left, and Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., talk before a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in July 2015.

senator's daughter, Meghan McCain, accepted the award on behalf of his late father-in-law.

Reed, an Army veteran, used the award as an opportunity to honor McCain, a Navy veteran, and recalled the times that they would attend the annual Navy-Army football game together.

"Tonight, you honor a great man," Reed said.

The Jacob K. Javits Prize for Bipartisan Leadership was established by the Marian B. and Jacob K. Javits Foundation to honor public servants whose achievements

advance the public interest without regard to political affiliation, the group said.

McCain and Reed followed in the footsteps of the late Sen. Jacob Javits, a New York Republican who served in Congress for more than 30 years to forge bipartisan solutions, they said.

Other groups involved in the honors included Results for America and the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation.

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'Tonight, you honor a great man.'

Sen. Jack Reed
D-R.I.

VA works to implement appeals reform in shadow of GI Bill woes

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs is expected to implement a new law in February that aims to shorten the time it takes veterans to appeal their claims for VA benefits — a process that can now last years.

While VA officials insist they're on track to have the new system set up on time, some lawmakers are approaching the issue with a sense of unease brought on because of damaging problems when the VA tried to implement a new education benefit this year.

Issues with the new "Forever" GI Bill cast a pall over a House Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing Wednesday at which lawmakers met the VA's confidence with skepticism.

"While we are all excited for appeals reform to rollout, it is also important for VA to understand this committee does not wish for VA to push out the new appeals system in February if it's not truly ready," said Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., the committee



JOE GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

Department of Veterans Affairs acting Deputy Secretary Jim Byrne, left, and other VA officials listen during a House Veterans' Affairs subcommittee hearing on appeals reform Wednesday.

chairman. "That's one lesson we all have learned from the Forever GI Bill."

The VA missed an Aug. 1 deadline to implement part of the Forever GI Bill — a major expansion

of veterans' education benefits Congress approved in 2017. When the agency went to make the necessary changes, they faced critical information technology errors that resulted in thousands

of veterans receiving late payments. The cost of the failures to veterans and taxpayers is not yet known.

Congress approved the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act last year and gave the agency an 18-month window to implement it. Like with the GI Bill, reforming the appeals process requires new IT capabilities.

"Appeals modernization implementation is not facing the IT challenges we've seen with Forever GI Bill implementation," said VA acting Deputy Secretary Jim Byrne. "I understand we all may be a little gun-shy about the actual execution, but in this case, there is a high degree of confidence."

Lloyd Thrower, deputy chief information officer for the VA, said it's a "very different scenario" than with the GI Bill.

"In this instance, we're updating two critical VA systems, and we have actually had boots on the ground working very hard long before this bill passed," Thrower said. "And the level of require-

ments we had to deal with was simpler."

The new appeals process is supposed to launch Feb. 14.

It will create multiple avenues for veterans to appeal their claims for disability compensation and health care, including an option to appeal their claims with a higher level adjudicator or directly with the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

Since November 2017, the VA has allowed veterans to opt into a new process called the Rapid Appeals Modernization Plan, or RAMP, which acted as a phased approach to implementing the law.

The process promised quicker VA reviews.

The VA reviewed about 75,600 appeals through RAMP in the past year and paid out \$137 million in retroactive benefits from those appeals, Byrne said.

"RAMP has given us a good picture of how this is going to be implemented," he said.

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WORLD

Seeking escape through artwork

Activist's drawings offer rare glimpse inside Egypt's prisons

By HAMZA HENDAWI
Associated Press

CAIRO — In Yassin Mohammed's sketches and paintings, he and other Egyptian prisoners are crammed into tiny cells, their feet in each other's faces and their few belongings hanging from the walls.

The cramped scenes, defined by bars and closed cell doors, capture the claustrophobic reality of Egypt's prisons, where tens of thousands have been locked away, often for months or years without charge, in the heaviest crackdown on dissent in the country's modern history.

"One day, all this pain will go away," one watercolor proclaims.

Mohammed, who walked free last month after serving a two-year sentence for taking part in a protest, chronicled daily life in his cellblock in dozens of sketches and paintings, offering a rare, intimate look inside Egypt's sprawling prison network.

He has been in and out of prison since 2013, when the military overthrew a freely elected, divisive, Islamist president. Since then, thousands of Islamists have been jailed, as well as a number of secular, pro-democracy activists, some of whom played a key role in the 2011 uprising that toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak.

Under President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, who as defense minister led the 2013 military takeover, authorities view even mild dissent as a threat. Protests have been outlawed, hundreds of websites have been blocked, and vague



YASSIN MOHAMMED

A drawing with Arabic that reads, "this time shall pass," was created in prison by Egyptian activist and artist Yassin Mohammed, who walked free last month after serving a two-year sentence for taking part in a protest.

laws criminalize the spreading of "false news."

For most of the two years he was in prison, Mohammed shared a 6-meter-by-15-meter cell with nearly 30 other inmates — Islamists, jihadis, liberal leftists and, he said, people who were simply at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Rights groups say abuse of political detainees is widespread in Egypt, but Mohammed said he wasn't physically abused, other than occasionally being pushed or slapped by guards. He said the real torment came from the



YASSIN MOHAMMED

This drawing created in prison by Egyptian activist and artist Yassin Mohammed captures the claustrophobic reality of Egypt's prisons, where tens of thousands have been locked away, often for months or years without charge, in the heaviest crackdown on dissent in the country's modern history.



NARIMAN EL-MOFTY/AP

Yassin Mohammed sits with a cat in an apartment he shares in Cairo.

unending boredom and the total lack of privacy.

His only escape was through art.

He managed to paint in a corner of his cell where the guards could not see him. Fearing that the guards would destroy the art if they found it, he smuggled the paintings out.

One piece that landed him in trouble was an unflattering caricature of el-Sissi, which guards seized in a surprise raid on his cell. Prison authorities chose not to press charges, instead sending him to solitary confinement, a light punishment for a man who said he yearned for privacy so much he spent time in the toilet just to avoid the other inmates.

A self-portrait inspired by that experience shows him sitting in the corner of a gray-and-black cell, slumped in resignation as a solitary ray of sunlight shines through the barred window.

Others show rare signs of normality or even beauty. A depiction of a prison bathroom — including garbage pails used by the inmates to store water because of frequent outages — has signs on the wall reading: "Please, leave the bathroom as you would like to see it!"

A bouquet of brightly colored flowers hangs above the bathroom — a wedding anniversary gift from the wife of one of the inmates.

In another painting, cardboard boxes turned into flower planters hang from the iron bars above a corridor. Mohammed said the prisoners save the cardboard boxes that their families use to deliver food and gather soil from sacks of potatoes they get from the prison's kitchen.

"Plants and flowers there are like life in the midst of death," Mohammed said.

Mohammed periodically had possession of a cellular phone while in prison, enabling him to communicate with a close circle of friends on social media. In the posts — which he asked his friends not to share for fear of repercussions — he described his



YASSIN MOHAMMED

This self portrait created in prison by Egyptian activist and artist Yassin Mohammed depicts Mohammed's time in solitary.

daily routine and chores, and the claustrophobia he depicted in the paintings.

"God, I pray to you every day when the call for the dawn prayers rings out so you will free all those that are unjustly jailed or to soften their plight, and to let me meet Tom Hanks," one post said, reflecting his near-obsessive admiration for the Oscar-winning film star.

Since his release Sept. 20, just a day short of his 24th birthday, he has been traveling across Cairo, collecting the works he smuggled

out. He would like to put on an exhibition of some 50 pieces, but Egypt's few remaining art galleries are unlikely to display his work for fear of angering authorities.

Instead, he plans to display them in his apartment in downtown Cairo.

"I don't want to go back to prison. It does not take to prison, much these days to be sent to prison," he said. "So, I will silently listen, watch and observe, and when I feel like I want to express a political opinion, I will talk to myself while alone in the privacy of my room."

NATION



AP

Maria Butina faces a maximum of five years in prison for being a secret agent for Russia, but she won't be sentenced immediately.

Butina admits conspiring as a Kremlin agent

Bloomberg

Maria Butina pleaded guilty to acting as an undeclared Russian agent in the U.S. and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors.

Butina operated as a Kremlin agent as she befriended National Rifle Association leaders and influential conservatives, she admitted Thursday in federal court in Washington.

Butina, 30, was arrested in July. While in the U.S. starting in 2015, she was actually working to advance Russia's interests, reporting regularly to a senior Russian official, according to her guilty plea.

She faces a maximum of five years in prison, but she won't be sentenced immediately. Her co-operation could lead to a reduced sentence.

The NRA didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The charges were filed by the Justice Department's national security unit and U.S. prosecutors in Washington, rather than by special counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russian influence in the 2016 presidential election.

As part of the plea agreement, Butina may provide information about Paul Erickson, her onetime boyfriend. Erickson matches the description of a man referred to as "U.S. Person 1" in Butina's charging documents. Erickson connected her with influential Republicans and wrote in a message that he had been involved "in securing a VERY private line of communication between the Kremlin" and key officials of the NRA, prosecutors said.

Erickson has visited Butina in jail several times this year, according to her attorney, Robert Driscoll. Bill Hurd, Erickson's

lawyer, said his client is "a good American" who "has never done anything to hurt our country and never would."

Her admission added to the drumbeat of developments in investigations related to the 2016 presidential election, with indications that prosecutors are receiving information from several people close to President Donald Trump.

This week, Trump's longtime fixer was sentenced to three years in prison and said he'd assist prosecutors, and the president's former national security adviser acknowledged he'd sat for 19 interviews with prosecutors and provided thousands of pages of documents. A tabloid publisher with ties to Trump is cooperating, too, after admitting to federal investigators in New York that its CEO talked to people on Trump's nascent campaign about buying and burying stories that could damage the candidate.

Russia says its spy agencies had no knowledge of Butina or her activities.

"When I heard something was going on around her, for a start I asked the heads of our secret services, 'Who is she?' Nobody knows anything about her," President Vladimir Putin said in a televised appearance in Moscow on Tuesday, the day after Butina said in a filing she wanted to change her plea.

Butina traveled to the U.S. in 2015 and entered the U.S. on a student visa in 2016 to study at American University in Washington. She reported to Alexander Torshin, the former deputy chairman of Russia's central bank, court documents show.

Driscoll, Butina's lawyer, has said his client was a legitimate university student.

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WORLD

May beats back no-confidence vote over Brexit

By William Booth,
Karla Adam and
Michael Birnbaum
The Washington Post

LONDON — Prime Minister Theresa May survived a humiliating challenge to her leadership Wednesday night, beating back a no-confidence vote triggered by rebels in her Conservative Party who oppose her compromise deal on how to leave the European Union.

May won the party-only vote by 200 to 117 — comfortably surpassing the simple majority of 159 votes she needed to hold on to power. But it was hardly a victory.

The public brawling and parliamentary challenge by her fellow Tories leaves May a wounded leader. The British prime minister is now immune to a leadership challenge by her party for a year, but she faces lawmakers hostile to her Brexit deal, which remains broadly unpopular.

In Brussels, May's survival offered measured relief to EU leaders, who have little option other than hoping she can hold on and get the Brexit deal approved by Parliament before the March 29

exit date.

But many countries have sped up emergency preparations, fearing that Britain's political paralysis will lead it to crash out of the EU without a deal.

"Glad about the outcome of tonight's vote," Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz wrote on Twitter. "Our shared goal is to avoid a no-deal scenario."

A no-deal Brexit could result in chaos at ports, a freeze in trade, empty grocery store shelves, grounded aircraft and the threat of recession, economists have warned.

Guy Verhofstadt, a Belgian politician and Brexit coordinator for the European Parliament, tweeted, "Even in the Tory party, there is no majority for no deal or hard Brexit."

Shortly after the vote that saved her job, May said: "This has been a long and challenging day. But, at the end of it, I'm pleased to have received the backing of my colleagues in tonight's ballot."

May declared she had a "renewed mission — delivering the Brexit people voted for, bringing the country back together and building a country that really



MATT DUNHAM/AP

British Prime Minister Theresa May has prevailed in a no-confidence vote of her Conservative lawmakers that could have ended her leadership of party and country.

works for everyone."

She had earlier warned rebellious lawmakers that ousting her would not make getting a better Brexit deal any easier but would bring delay and confusion.

In an 11th-hour meeting with her backbench, apparently to win further support, May told Tory members that she would not stand for election again.

George Freeman, a Conservative member of Parliament, spoke of a "powerful and moving moment" as May told her fellow Tories that she has "listened,

heard and respects the will of the party" and that once she delivers Brexit "she will step aside for the election of a new leader to lead the reunification and renewal we need." Delivering Brexit, however, could take years.

May and her Brexit plan have been pummeled for weeks by members of Parliament, from her own party and the opposition. Hard-line Brexiters want a cleaner break from the EU, while remainers worry about the economic and other costs of what May has proposed.

Gunman kills 2 Israelis in West Bank

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — A Palestinian gunman opened fire at a bus stop outside a West Bank settlement on Thursday, shooting at soldiers and civilians and killing at least two Israelis before fleeing, the military and Israel's rescue service said.

The deaths extend a violent week that began with a shooting outside a West Bank settlement on Sunday, resulting in the death of a baby who was delivered prematurely following the weekend attack, and continued with the killing of two Palestinians wanted in that and another attack on Israelis in the West Bank.

The Israeli military said the assailant stepped out of his car and fired at the bus stop, wounding several people and then fleeing the scene. It said forces were searching the area for the attacker.

Eli Bin, the head of Israel's Magen David Adom service, told Israeli Army Radio that two people were killed in the shooting, which occurred at a location about a 10-minute drive south from the place of Sunday's attack.

Chocolate über alles: Road flooded by factory mishap

By Amy B Wang
The Washington Post

It was an accident. It was a municipal headache. It was a Roald Dahl fan's dream.

Just before 8 p.m. Monday, liquid chocolate began streaming out of the DreierMeister chocolate factory in Westmonen, a suburb of Werl, Germany.

A tank at the factory had overflowed, prompting a river of chocolate to breach the factory grounds and ooze onto Weststrasse, the nearest road.

Soon, the leaked liquid chocolate — about a ton in all — solidified in the crisp December air, creating something of a magical carpet that blanketed Weststrasse.

"A ten-square-meter chocolate pancake formed," the Werl fire department explained in a dramatic statement that warned chocolate lovers to "stay strong" before reading about the incident.

Comparisons to "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" were inevitable on social media, with one person tweeting, "Willy Wonka, that you?"

The Werl fire department said the road was closed for about two hours and cleaned "with shovels and muscle power."

"This was a traffic hazard, which made the use of the fire department necessary," the department said.

Images of the cleanup effort showed firefighters using shovels, blow torches and hot water to remove the congealed and hardened chocolate — and appearing to throw it away in nearby bins.

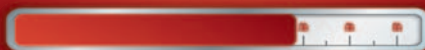
The Werl fire department assured people that "despite the heartbreaking incident, it is unlikely that a chocolate-free Christmas is imminent in Werl."

DreierMeister chief executive Markus Luckey told the Germany newspaper Soester Anzeiger that it would have been "a catastrophe" had the spill happened closer to Christmas and that the chocolate factory would be reopened Wednesday.

It's not the first time Europe has seen such a delicious mess. Earlier this year, about 12 tons of melted chocolate spilled across a highway in Poland after a tanker overturned.

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WORLD



BURHAN OZBILICI/AP

Rescue workers sift through the scene of a train accident in Ankara, Turkey, on Thursday in which a high-speed train collided with a railway engine and crashed into a pedestrian overpass.

Train crash kills 9 in Turkey

By BURHAN OZBILICI
AND SUZAN FRASER
Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — A high-speed train hit a railway engine and crashed into a pedestrian overpass in the Turkish capital Thursday, killing nine people and injuring 47 others, officials said.

The 6:30 a.m. train from Ankara to the central Turkish city of Konya collided head-on with the engine, which was checking the tracks at the capital's small Marsandiz station, Transport Minister Mehmet Cahit Turhan told reporters after inspecting the site. The high-speed train transits that station without stopping.

At least two cars derailed, hitting the station's overpass which then collapsed onto the train.

Three engine drivers and six passengers were killed, Turhan said. One of the passengers died after being hospitalized, while others were killed at the scene.

Television footage showed

emergency services working to rescue passengers from mangled cars and debris. Hurriyet newspaper said sniffer dogs assisted efforts to find survivors.

Turhan said it was believed that everyone had been removed from the debris.

It wasn't immediately clear if a signaling problem caused the crash. Ankara Gov. Vasi Sahin said a technical inspection has begun. NTV television, quoting unnamed officials, said three prosecutors were assigned to investigate.

Passenger Ayse Ozyurt told the IHA news agency that the accident occurred 12 minutes after the train left the main station and that it had not gained maximum speed.

"The train was not fast at that time yet," she said. "Suddenly, there was a frightening breakage ... and the train was off the rail."

In July, 24 people were killed and more than 70 injured when most of a passenger train de-

railed in northwestern Turkey, after torrential rains caused part of the rail tracks to collapse. Last month, 15 people were injured when a passenger train collided with a freight train in Turkey's central province of Sivas.

China detains Canadians, raising stakes in dispute

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN
AND ROB GILLIES
Associated Press

BEIJING — China on Thursday confirmed it has detained two Canadian men, raising the stakes in a three-way international dispute over the case of a Chinese telecoms executive facing possible extradition from Canada to the U.S.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said entrepreneur Michael Spavor and former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig were taken into custody Monday on suspicion of "engaging in activities that endanger the national security" of China.

The broadly defined national security charge includes traditional espionage and other forms of information gathering such as interviewing dissidents and contacting nongovernmental organizations.

Lu said Canada was informed of the detentions, but declined to say whether the men have been provided with lawyers. He said the cases are being handled separately by local bureaus of the national intelligence agency in Beijing, where Kovrig was picked up, and the northeastern city of Dandong, where Spavor was living.

"The legal rights of the two Canadians are being safeguarded," Lu told reporters at a daily briefing.

The detentions echo that of another Canadian, Keven Garratt, who spent 750 days in detention in 2014-16 and was given an eight-year prison sentence for espionage before being deported. Garratt's detention was seen as a tit-for-tat response to Canada's arrest of a Chinese spy who was eventually extradited to the U.S.

The cases ratchet up pressure on Canada, which is holding Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Huawei Technologies. She was arrested while changing planes in Vancouver, British Columbia, on Dec. 1 but released on bail. The U.S. has requested her extradition to face charges of bank fraud.

The U.S. accuses Huawei of using a Hong Kong shell company to deceive banks and do business with Iran in violation of U.S. sanctions.

China warned of dire consequences if Meng wasn't released, and the editor in chief of the Global Times, a Communist Party-run tabloid known for its provocative views, warned in a video Wednesday night of "retaliatory measures" if Canada doesn't free Meng.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Charges dropped in school chair tossing

MI ST. JOSEPH — A prosecutor has dropped charges of failing to report child abuse against two school officials in a case in which an art teacher threw a chair in his southwestern Michigan classroom, hitting and injuring an 11-year-old student.

Berrien County Prosecutor Michael Sepic announced Tuesday the decision comes after Benton Harbor Charter School Academy's governing body, Choice Schools Associates, took steps to educate those at its schools about reporting child abuse. The principal and assistant principal who were charged participated in the training.

The teacher, Thomas Barnes, was fired. He pleaded guilty in November to misdemeanor assault and received a 30-day suspended jail sentence, nine months of probation and 50 hours community service.

After 14 years, woman gets \$3 from police

NJ MONMOUTH BEACH — Police in New Jersey have given \$3 to the person who found it 14 years ago.

Paige Woodie was 12 when she and a friend discovered the cash and turned it into a Monmouth Beach police officer in 2004.

Sgt. Jeff Godwin told the Asbury Park Press that people who turn in found money are able to claim it within a reasonable amount of time if no one comes forward. The cash turned up during an audit and police "thought it had been long enough."

Woodie said officers came to her home and asked if she could remember what she did in 2004. She couldn't think of anything bad. That's when the officers turned over the \$3 in an evidence bag. She said half belongs to her friend.

Paramedics debut armored ambulance

ID BOISE — Ada County Paramedics unveiled a brand-new vehicle to help the team in dangerous situations — a custom-made armored ambulance.

The ambulance, plated in black, bulletproof metal with the word "RESCUE" on the side, made its debut Monday.

The \$312,000 ambulance, delivered by the Department of Homeland Security, will accompany the Ada County Paramedics' Tactical Medical Team when they join SWAT teams in the field. It will offer paramedics a safe place to render aid to those injured and a place to store more medical equipment.

"We wish we didn't have to have this type of equipment but, unfortunately, in today's world we do," said Ada County Commissioner Jim Tibbs.

Cold-stunned turtles get trip to the Keys

FL MARATHON — Officials said 32 cold-stunned

THE CENSUS

101

The age of a McMurray, Pa., man who was given free beer and invited on a brewery tour after his Dec. 1 birthday. World War II Air Force veteran Andrew E. Slavonic was given a Coors Light-embellished refrigerator stocked with the beer, branded hats and shirts, and the invitation to tour the brand's Golden, Colo., brewery after his family credited his daily 4 p.m. beer for his long life.



ELLEN O'NAN, THE PADUCAH SUN/AP

Putting a good spin on the holidays

Bryan Ligon, 6, rides his new bike in the gymnasium at the Oscar Cross Boys & Girls Club in Paducah, Ky., on Friday. Academy Sports + Outdoors and the Paducah Police Department surprised 30 deserving children with new bikes and helmets as part of Academy's 17th annual bike donation program, which will benefit more than 5,500 children across 16 states this holiday season.

Kemp's ridley sea turtles rescued off New England's coast have arrived in the Florida Keys to warm up at the Turtle Hospital.

A volunteer group of general aviation pilots, under the banner of "Turtles Fly Too," transported the reptiles Tuesday.

Hospital officials said several of the turtles suffered from compromised immune systems and pneumonia as a result of "cold stunning," a hypothermic reaction that occurs when turtles are exposed to cold water for prolonged periods.

Club ostracized over membership rejection

SC CHARLESTON — A South Carolina rifle club's decision to deny membership to its first black candidate has cost it relationships with several local groups, including a long-favored church.

The Post and Courier reported that Navy veteran and doctor Melvin Brown was the only one denied membership to the Charleston Rifle Club in Octo-

ber. The 13 accepted were white, sparking accusations of racism.

Porter-Gaud and College of Charleston bowling groups and the Kiwanis Club of Charleston have stopped using the club's facilities, and the March of Dimes announced Saturday it won't accept further club support. The rifle club's bylaws bequeath half its assets to the charity in the event of dissolution.

Fort will restage 1776 Christmas riot

NY TICONDEROGA — The first Christmas at Fort Ticonderoga under the newly formed United States was a riot — literally.

Staff and volunteers at the upstate New York tourist attraction and museum will stage a re-enactment this weekend of what's known as the Christmas riot of 1776, when Pennsylvania soldiers attacked Massachusetts militiamen.

Curator Matthew Keagle said the Pennsylvanians derisively referred to as "buckskins" and the New Englanders didn't get

along early in the American Revolution.

Tensions erupted into an all-out brawl the night of Dec. 25, 1776, when a Pennsylvania battalion attacked Massachusetts troops, pulling the "Yankees" from their huts and beating them, and even firing off a few musket shots in their direction.

Dogs avoid injury while roaming on freeway

AZ PHOENIX — Authorities said a group of dogs narrowly avoided injury while roaming a Phoenix freeway during Monday morning traffic.

The Arizona Department of Transportation shared images on its Twitter account of six dogs walking in the southbound lanes of Interstate 17 near Grand Avenue around 9:45 a.m. The images also showed drivers stopping for them.

Authorities said the pups were on the roadway for about 10 minutes before Arizona Department of Public Safety troopers on motorcycles were able to usher them to safety.

Mom's bail reduced in child shooting case

NM GALLUP — A judge on Wednesday reduced bail for the mother of an 8-month-old girl who police say was shot in the face at a New Mexico motel.

Following a hearing, New Mexico State District Judge Robert Baca decided to decrease the bond for Shayanne Nelson from \$50,000 to \$20,000.

Nelson, 18, was arrested after telling police she was in a Gallup motel shower with her boyfriend, Tyrell Bitsilly, 21, when her 3-year-old boy found a gun and accidentally shot the infant. Nelson said she believed the gun was left in the room by a prior occupant.

Nelson and Bitsilly are facing child abuse charges. Bitsilly also was charged with tampering with evidence. He remained held on \$70,000 bond.

Bitsilly's attorney, John Bernitz, said police believe the shooting was an accident.

From wire reports

BUSINESS/WEATHER

China suspected in Marriott data breach, official says

By MICHAEL BALSAMO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Investigators believe hackers working on behalf of China's main intelligence agency are responsible for a massive data breach involving the theft of personal information from as many as 500 million guests of the Marriott hotel chain, a U.S. official said Wednesday.

Investigators suspect the hackers were working on behalf of the Chinese Ministry of State Security, an official briefed on the investigation told The Associated Press.

The official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity, said investigators were particularly concerned about the data breach in part because Marriott is frequently used by the military and government agencies.

Marriott, which announced the data breach on Nov. 30, has not disclosed what it knows about the source of the hack, which included the theft of credit card and passport numbers over four years from guests who stayed at hotels previously operated by Starwood.

Marriott acquired Starwood, which includes such brands as Sheraton, W Hotels and St. Regis, in 2016.

"Our primary objectives in this investigation are figuring out what occurred and how we can best help our guests," Marriott spokeswoman Connie Kim said. "We have no information about the cause of this incident, and we have not speculated about the identity of the attacker."

The revelation of suspected involvement by China comes amid heightened tension with the U.S. over trade; the arrest in Canada

on an American warrant of a top executive of Chinese electronics giant Huawei; and alarm among law enforcement officials about Chinese efforts to steal technology to bolster its growing economy.

Chinese espionage efforts have become "the most severe counterintelligence threat facing our country today," Bill Priestap, the assistant director of the FBI's counterintelligence division, told the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday.

Cybersecurity expert Jesse Varso, of University of Maryland University College, said the

Marriott hack does have signs of a foreign intelligence agency involvement.

"It's about intelligence, human intelligence," he said. "To me, it seems focused on tracking certain people."

Priscilla Moriuchi, of Recorded Future, an East Asia specialist who left the National Security Agency last year after a 12-year career, cautioned that no one has put out any actual data or indicators showing Chinese state actor involvement in the Marriott intrusion.

Apple announces plan to build \$1 billion campus in Texas

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Apple will build a \$1 billion campus in Austin, Texas, and establish smaller new locations in Seattle, San Diego and Culver City, Calif., the company said Thursday.

The tech giant based in Cupertino, Calif., says the new campus in Austin will start with 5,000 employees working in engineering, research and development, operations, finance, sales and customer support. It will be less

than a mile from existing Apple facilities.

The other new locations will have more than 1,000 employees each.

Austin already is home to more than 6,000 Apple employees, representing the largest population of the company's workers outside of Apple's Cupertino headquarters, where most of its roughly 37,000 California employees work.

"Apple has been a vital part of the Austin community for a quar-

ter century, and we are thrilled that they are deepening their investment in our people and the city we love," said Austin Mayor Steve Adler in a statement.

The company also said it plans to expand in Pittsburgh, New York and Colorado over the next three years.

The Austin announcement comes nearly a year after Apple disclosed it would canvas the U.S. for another location.

Cities wooed Apple with vari-

ous incentives, though Apple CEO Tim Cook said the company wasn't trying to stage a competition like Amazon, which encouraged civic leaders to come up with enticing packages if they wanted their cities to become the home of its second headquarters.

Amazon announced last month that after a 14-month search it had selected Long Island City, Queens, and Arlington, Va., as the joint winners. Each site will get 25,000 jobs.

EUROPE GAS PRICES				
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$2.946	\$3.108	\$3.345	\$3.546
Change in price	-2.0 cents	-4.1 cents	-4.0 cents	-0.2 cents
Netherlands	--	\$3.268	\$3.505	\$3.656
Change in price	--	-4.1 cents	-4.0 cents	-10.7 cents
U.K.	--	\$3.042	\$3.279	\$3.361
Change in price	--	-4.1 cents	-4.0 cents	-4.6 cents
Azores	--	--	\$3.266	--
Change in price	--	--	-4.0 cents	--
Belgium	--	\$2.629	\$2.843	\$3.252
Change in price	--	No change	No change	No change
Turkey	--	--	\$3.162	\$3.244
Change in price	--	--	-29.1 cents	-4.6 cents
Italy	\$4.127	--	--	\$4.354
Change in price	No change	--	--	No change

PACIFIC GAS PRICES				
Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	--	\$3.129	--	\$3.209
Change in price	--	-4.0 cents	--	-5.0 cents
Okhawa	\$2.469	--	--	\$3.209
Change in price	-3.0 cents	--	--	-5.0 cents
South Korea	\$2.509	--	\$3.169	\$3.249
Change in price	-3.0 cents	--	-4.0 cents	-4.0 cents
Guam	\$2.489**	\$2.909	\$3.149	--
Change in price	-3.0 cents	-5.0 cents	-4.0 cents	--

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of Dec. 15-21

MARKET WATCH	
Dec. 12, 2018	
Dow Jones Industrials	157.03
	24,527.27
Nasdaq composite	66.48
	7,098.31
Standard & Poor's 500	14.29
	2,651.07
Russell 2000	15.19
	1,455.32

EXCHANGE RATES	
Military rates	
Euro costs (Dec 14)	\$1.1669
Dollar buys (Dec 14)	40.857
British pound (Dec 14)	\$1.30
Japanese yen (Dec 14)	111.00
South Korean won (Dec 14)	1,098.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769
British pound	\$1.2632
Canada (Dollar)	1.3373
China (Yuan)	6.8835
Denmark (Krone)	6.8807
Egypt (Pound)	17.9199
Euro	\$1.1343/0.8816
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8098
Hungary (Forint)	284.90
Israel (Shekel)	3.7647
Japan (Yen)	113.55
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3043
Norway (Krone)	8.5860
Philippines (Peso)	52.69
Poland (Zloty)	3.78
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7514
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3716
South Korea (Won)	1,125.80
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9936
Thailand (Baht)	32.74
Turkey (Lira)	5.3463

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	5.25
Discount rate	2.75
Federal funds market rate	2.00
3-month bill	2.38
30-year bond	3.15

WEATHER OUTLOOK



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.



Pages 34-35

WEEKEND: GADGETS



PATRICK T. FALLON/Bloomberg

'Fortnite' addiction forcing kids into video-game rehab

BY JEFF FEELEY AND CHRISTOPHER PALMERI
Bloomberg

Debbie Vitany is fighting a losing battle against "Fortnite."

Her 17-year-old son, Carson, has been logging 12 hours a day on the video game, searching for weapons and resources in a post-apocalyptic world where the goal is being the last person standing. Teachers complain he falls asleep in class and his grades have plummeted.

"We'd made some progress in getting him to cut down his 'Fortnite' hours and get better sleep, but he's slipped back into his old habits," Vitany, who lives near Saginaw, Mich., said in an interview. "I've never seen a game that has such control over kids' minds."

Vitany's anguish is echoed by an army of other parents, teachers and bosses around the world grappling with a game that sucks up hours of players' time — sometimes to the detriment of other activities. More than 200 million people have registered to play "Fortnite," which has become a billion-dollar business for its creator, Epic Games Inc. Some desperate parents have sent their kids to rehab.

"This game is like heroin," said Lorraine Marer, a British behavioral specialist who works with kids battling game addiction. "Once you are hooked, it's hard to get unhooked."

Epic declined to comment on the addiction issue.

Video-game addiction isn't new: Parents and teachers have been carping about distracted children — and their joystick-addled hands — since the days of Atari consoles. But the ubiquity of "Fortnite" has created a more widespread menace. And it's happening against the backdrop of broader concerns about social-media and smartphone overuse.

"Fortnite," first released in its popular "battle royale" mode in September 2017, isn't just causing problems for kids. An online U.K. divorce service says 200 petitions cited "Fortnite" and other video

games this year as the reason for the breakup of marriages.

Professional athletes are getting hooked, too. The NHL's Vancouver Canucks had so much trouble getting players to meetings and dinners that they banned "Fortnite" on the road.

Randy Kulman, a child psychologist in Wakefield, R.I., has seen a surge in parents taking their kids to counseling because of video-game addictions.

"I had a 13-year-old in my office who said he had 300 'Fortnite' wins," Kulman said. "I had to stop for a minute and calculate what he had to invest just to get those."

Michael Jacatus, who runs the Reset Summer Camp for kids with addictions, said about 60 percent of the 120 children he counseled at camps in Santa Barbara, Calif., and Asheville, N.C., last summer were playing "Fortnite" excessively. "Treatment involves a technology detox — their devices are taken away — combined with healthy eating, sleep and group therapy."

"Fortnite" is particularly compelling because the battle-royale version is free to play and available on a range of devices from phones to gaming consoles, notes Cam Adair, who dropped out of high school at age 15 due to his own video-game addiction and now speaks on the subject to schools and others groups.

"Fortnite" players compete in 100-person fights until the last one is standing — matches that make it difficult to quit once they're started.

"It's World War III if a parent asks their son to come to dinner because if they leave, they lose," Adair said.

While the game is free, Epic has created opportunities to sell hundreds of dollars of add-ons — including exotic weapons and "skins," such as Dark Voyager, a black space suit with reflective stripes — on an outfit card.

The World Health Organization designated "gaming disorder" as a disease for the first time in June, a move that could make it easier for parents to seek reimbursement for treatment from insurers, according to Paul Weigle, a psychiatrist in Mansfield Center, Conn.

GADGET WATCH

Last-minute gifts that will get used

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

There's always more to add to a holiday shopping list of cool tech stuff. But as we get down to the shopping deadline, this can include the basics. Here are some essentials that any family, friend or neighbor can use:

Crosley's new retro cassette player/recorder is simply awesome for its looks and functionality, and it includes some nice modern features. I still have boxes of perfectly playable cassette tapes. They bring back some great playlists, which I don't refer to as retro, I rather say they are original! Pressing actual buttons for start, stop, pause, play, forward and back might be new to some and refreshing to others. The portable tape deck plays cassette tapes or choose an AM or FM radio station with the side knob and extendable antenna. The CT100 tape deck also has a USB port and SD card slot for playing digital music. There's also a headphone jack and built-in microphone.

Online: crosleyradio.com; \$59.95



iHOME/TNS

The iHome iA2V speaker system built for the Amazon Echo Dot voice assistant hardware is a useful bedside or office desktop system. Along with dimmable time display, 360-degree sound and a USB port for smartphone charging, the attractive feature is the top-sided clock for your Echo Dot (2nd generation). Just drop it there and you can give Alexa commands to play music, playlists, hear the weather when you awake, turn on lights or set an alarm. While in the dock, the Echo keeps itself charged.

Online: iHomeAudio.com; \$69.99



EARIN/TNS

Earin M-2 true wireless earphones are small, stylish and have amazing sound. They travel great in a pocket or purse inside a 3.75-by-.75-inch cylinder charging/storage aluminum capsule. Earin's new patented automatic left/right recognition technology make it so there's no need to figure out which goes in the left or right ear. Just, pop 'em in and play. With Bluetooth 4.2, they pair flawlessly and wear in comfort. Touch control is built in to manage calls, music and even voice assistants. Battery life is 4 hours, and the capsule charging adds another 14.

Online: Earin.com; \$249 black and white versions available



CROSLEY/TNS

Crosley's new retro cassette player/recorder has a fantastic appearance and functionality, and includes some nice modern features.

The Ring Video Doorbell 2 installs in minutes with your existing doorbell hardware, or choose the quick-release USB rechargeable version. Once installed and connected to Wi-Fi, you'll see who is at the front door through the Ring app (iOS and Android) and with live view, speak to visitors, essentially answering the door with your smartphone from anywhere in the world. The 1080HD 160-degree wide-angle video can be stored in the cloud, depending on the plan you choose, or it's downloadable on social media to alert neighbors. The security is unmatched for day-to-day use. And think about delivered packages sitting on your doorstep for hours until you get home. Now you have eyes on them at all times with the cloud-based security system. Ring has easy-to-install solar chargers, security cameras, lights and kits to enhance your home and your holiday shopping lists.

Online: Ring.com; \$199



SCOSCHE/TNS

The magnetic Magic-Mount Pro from Scosche is great for just about any Qi wireless charging-compatible phone. Just install one of the two included magic plates to the back of your phone and secure the adhesive magic mount to your dashboard. The magnets are entirely mobile device safe. Now your smartphone is ready to mount and remove for

hands-free use. The mount has 360-degree movement, so it's easy to find the perfect angle.

Online: scosche.com; \$14.21

The ZAGG Flex is a portable and, more importantly, a universal Bluetooth keyboard and detachable stand for smartphones, tablets and even smart TVs. It's built with multi-device pairing so it's easy with the press of a button to toggle between devices or users. You have a choice of seven colors for backlit keys on the laptop-style keyboard. When not in use, the included protective cover is great to keep it safely stored.

Online:

Zagg.com; \$55.99

ZAGG.com/TNS

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

1

It's storm season for 'Just Cause 4'

Players familiar with Just Cause know the thrills of sheer wanton destruction served up by the video game franchise. "Just Cause 4" provides new deadly tools, customization options and four extreme weather conditions to up the ante once again. Cruising around a massive map, looking for enemies to blow up while encountering tornadoes, blizzards, sandstorms and heavy rainfall with lightning — and did we mention the new grappling hook functions? — will keep players engaged for a long, long time.

- Full review on Page 26.


AVALANCHE/GamesPress.com

"Just Cause 4" adds four extreme weather conditions to the series' high-speed and malleable action as players seek to take out their enemies across a huge map.

2

Relive glory days of show on Netflix

Couldn't get to Broadway to catch Bruce Springsteen's solo acoustic show there? Neither could we. But in good news for working-class stiff everywhere, The Boss is coming to Netflix in "Springsteen on Broadway," a TV special recorded during one of those crazy expensive shows. It's just Bruce, his guitar, a piano and some very personal stories. The show is available on Netflix as of Sunday.

- More about "Springsteen on Broadway" on Page 39.



3

'The Voice' closes crazy Season 15

"The Voice" is, as you're probably aware, a popular reality TV singing competition in which celebrity judges listen, sight unseen, to contestants, then flip their chairs around if they like what they hear. Fans flipped out after a recent episode in which celebrity judge Adam Levine urged viewers to vote for one of his singers over another. The Season 15 finale take place over two consecutive nights this week on AFN.

- "The Voice" finale airs Dec. 18 and 19 on AFN-Pulse.

4

Box set relives Korean War

The Korean War of 1950-53 is often called the "Forgotten War." The conflict inspired many songs, which are largely unfamiliar to most. Music historian Hugo Keesing hopes to bring these mostly obscure tunes back to the forefront by compiling a 160-page photo-heavy book and four-CD box set, "Battleground Korea."

- More about "Battleground Korea" on Pages 24-25.

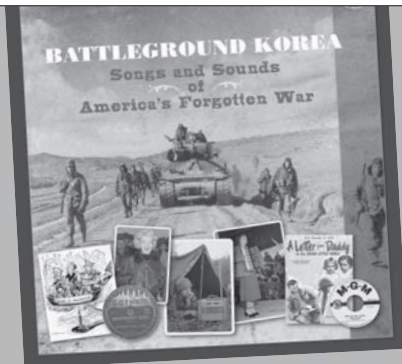
WEEKEND: MUSIC



Forgotten War

comes back

to forefront



Grammy-nominated box set 'Battleground Korea' seeks to teach through era's songs

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

Overshadowed by World War II and Vietnam, the 1950-53 Korean War is often called the "Forgotten War." The same could be said for much of the music it inspired.

Music historian Hugo Keesing and co-producer Bill Geerhart seek to change that with "Battleground Korea: Songs and Sounds of America's Forgotten War."

More than three years in the making, the anthology's release in May was timely as nuclear talks with North Korea renewed interest in the Cold War conflict.

The effort paid off Dec. 7 with a Grammy nomination for best historical record. The awards will be announced in February.



Keesing

Keesing, a retired professor who taught popular music classes at the University of Maryland, tapped into a network of DJs and record collectors and dug deep in the Library of Congress, Billboard magazine and other archives to find at least 900 songs written about the war, though not all were recorded.

The box set, which comes with a glossy 160-page book and four CDs — priced at just over \$100 — includes 121 tracks

from artists such as B.B. King, Fats Domino, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Gene Autry as well as newsreel clips from war-time presidents Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower, Gen. Douglas MacArthur and others.

It was published by Bear Family Records, the independent German label that was also behind Keesing's previous project, "Next Stop is Vietnam: The War on Record, 1961-2008," which was released in 2010 and generated 13 CDs.

The music on "Battleground Korea" — a mix of blues, swing, jazz, country and early rock 'n' roll — is largely arranged in chronological order around four themes labeled: Going to War Again, Somewhere in Korea, On the Homefront and Peace and its Legacies.

The companion book, which is laid out like a scrapbook, is filled with photos that include iconic images of Marilyn Monroe's 1954 USO tour. It also contains lyrics, historical summaries and detailed write-ups about the songs and artists.

"I think of music as opening doors, maybe opening minds," Keesing told Stars and Stripes during a visit to Seoul. "I have found in many years of teaching that students are willing to sit through something that has music. It is a different way of reaching them."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

WEEKEND: MUSIC

BY JON BREAM AND CHRIS RIEMENSCHNEIDER
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

We've put together some recommendations for music lovers on your holiday shopping lists — the ones who want something tangible to hold besides an iPhone with a streaming app.

"Michael Jackson: All the Songs" by Richard Leacock and François Allard (Cassell, \$50)

This 600-page doornstop tells the back stories behind every song MJ ever recorded, including with the Jackson 5. The prose is as workman-like as the research is thorough, and the photos are fun. There's even the story of Prince turning down Jackson's request to make the song "Bad" a duet.

"Paul Simon: The Life" by Robert Hilburn (Simon & Schuster, \$30)

The longtime Los Angeles Times critic got the songwriting giant to cooperate but Simon didn't have approval over the book. Even though Art Garfunkel never granted Hilburn an interview, the 400-page tome is comprehensive, insightful and befitting its thoughtful subject.

"Prince and the Purple Rain Era Studio Sessions 1983 and 1984" by Duane Tudahl (Rowman & Littlefield, \$24.95)

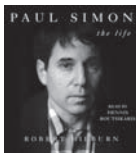
The Los Angeles writer got insiders, especially engineers and band members, to tell revealing stories about these pivotal years — in interviews before Prince died. The focus is on recording sessions. Tudahl has updated information so convincingly that he was hired this year to work on Prince's archives.

"Prince: Before the Rain" by Allen Beaulieu (Minnesota Historical Society Press, \$29.95)

The Minneapolis fashion photographer had access to the Purple One in the late '70s/early '80s, shooting album covers, concerts and offstage shenanigans. The concert pictures are disappointingly blurry albeit historic, but the posed and candid photos are priceless.

"Beastie Boys Book," by Michael Diamond & Adam Horowitz (Spiegel & Grau, \$50)

This massive 590-page "panoramic book" is predictably wild, weird and way more fun than most bands' memoirs, with lots of photos, artwork and input from celeb pals such as Amy Poehler. More surprising, the surviving Beasties write with sharp insight and grace, especially about their late bandmate Adam Yauch.



12

great gifts for the
musichead on your
holiday shopping list



iStock

David Bowie, "Loving the Alien (1983-1988)" (Rhino, around \$120/\$210)

Fourth in a chronological series of sprawling Bowie boxed sets, the 11-CD or 15-LP anthology spans from the MTV-buoyed album "Let's Dance" to the under-rated "Glass Spider (Live Montreal '87)." Among the "new" offerings are the rarities disc "Re:Call 4," the fun if novel remix set "Dance" and a rerecorded version of the entire "Never Let Me Down" album, a title that rings true even in this lesser-celebrated era of the late rock genius' career.

Semisonic, "Feeling Strangely Fine: 20th Anniversary Edition" (Universal, \$14/\$34)

Yes, "Closing Time" is almost old enough to shut down a bar. This nicely remastered and ambitiously repackaged reissue — including its first vinyl incarnation! — reiterates how much more there was to the Minneapolis rock trio's second album than its megahit, from the equally catchy "Singing in My Sleep" to four newly added and very worthy B-sides.

Bikini Kill, "The Singles" (Kill Rock Stars, \$18)

Anchored by the Joan Jett-produced anthem "Rebel Girl," this compilation of three different 7-inch records was released rather inconsequentially in 1998. It has since turned into perhaps the most celebrated and influential album by feminist punk icon Kathleen Hanna and her hard-rocking Olympia, Wash., band. Old-school fans would love unwrapping the reissue on vinyl, but today's cool indie kids could (and should) enjoy it, too.

Bob Dylan, "More Blood, More Tracks: Bootleg Series Vol. 14" (Sony Legacy, \$13-\$110)

Not only does this finally give official credit to the Minneapolis musicians who recorded anonymously on Dylan's 1975 landmark "Blood on the Tracks," but it affords fans a chance to compare the oft-bootlegged New York sessions with the Minneapolis ones, where five songs were recut with a full band and an angrier vibe. Plus, if you listen to all six CDs, you'll get a window into Dylan's demo-free recording process or which no two takes are alike. Also available as a single disc.

The Beatles, "The Beatles (White Album)" (Capitol, \$25-\$179)

It's the 50th anniversary of the Beatles' biggest (30 songs) and most eclectic album, and you can discover the demos, outtakes and drama (enter Yoko Ono) on the six-CD plus Blu-ray super-deluxe package. There are 27 acoustic demos and 50 mostly previously unreleased tracks plus a book and remastering by Giles Martin, son of Sir George Martin. Is anything ever too much for Beatlemaniacs?

Metallica, "... And Justice for All (Remastered)" (Rhino/Blackened, \$25-\$200)

Before they met up and slicked up with producer Bob Rock for their "Black Album," the thrash-metal giants released this far more dense and artistic masterpiece, featuring the MTV hit "One" and such fan faves as "Harvester of Sorrow" and "Blackened." The 30th-anniversary \$200 megabox seems like a bit much, but the \$25 180-gram double-LP or expanded three-CD set are very justifiable.

FROM PAGE 24

The anthology starts with songs about men being drafted and sent back into battle overseas just a few years after World War II and reflects the murkiness of a conflict that was not technically declared a war but rather a police action or a United Nations intervention.

Instead of a clear victory, the fighting ended with a truce after the adversaries failed to reach a peace treaty.

"Without a Pearl Harbor-like event or Hitlerian villain, songs could not rally the country around a cause, a reason to volunteer for military service or other war-related work," the book says.

Keening those songs to portray the complexity of the war, which killed more than 36,000 American troops as well as hundreds of thousands of Koreans and Chinese.

The history comes in snippets that provide just enough context



Courtesy of Bear Family Records

A soldier cues up a record for the Far East Network in Japan in 1952, the second year of the Korean War.

to understand the real star of the anthology — the music, which may stir memories good and bad for military veterans and provide an entertaining lesson for stu-

dents of the conflict.

"Well I just got home and I got to go back again," sang the Four Barons in 1950, echoing a theme that's just as relevant in modern

times as many soldiers have faced multiple deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Goodbye Maria, I'm off to Korea," rhymes Vince Mondini in a 1951 song, adding the purpose is "to win another fight for liberty."

Other selections focus on prisoners of war and orphaned Korean children as well as teenagers who those left behind, such as "Dear Little Girls" and "Daddy's Last Letter," based on a letter from Pfc. John J. McCormick to his daughters before his death early in the war.

Relationships were another popular theme. "A Dear John Letter," a 1953 song by Jean Shepard with recitation by Ferlin Husky, was "the only true hit to emerge from four years of songs about Korea," according to the anthology.

It inspired response songs such as "John's Reply" and "Dear Joan."

The music is punctuated by

crackling radio soundbites from public announcements and news items, including the farewell address by Gen. Douglas MacArthur in the which he famously said, "Old soldiers never die they just fade away," after he was relieved of duty by Truman.

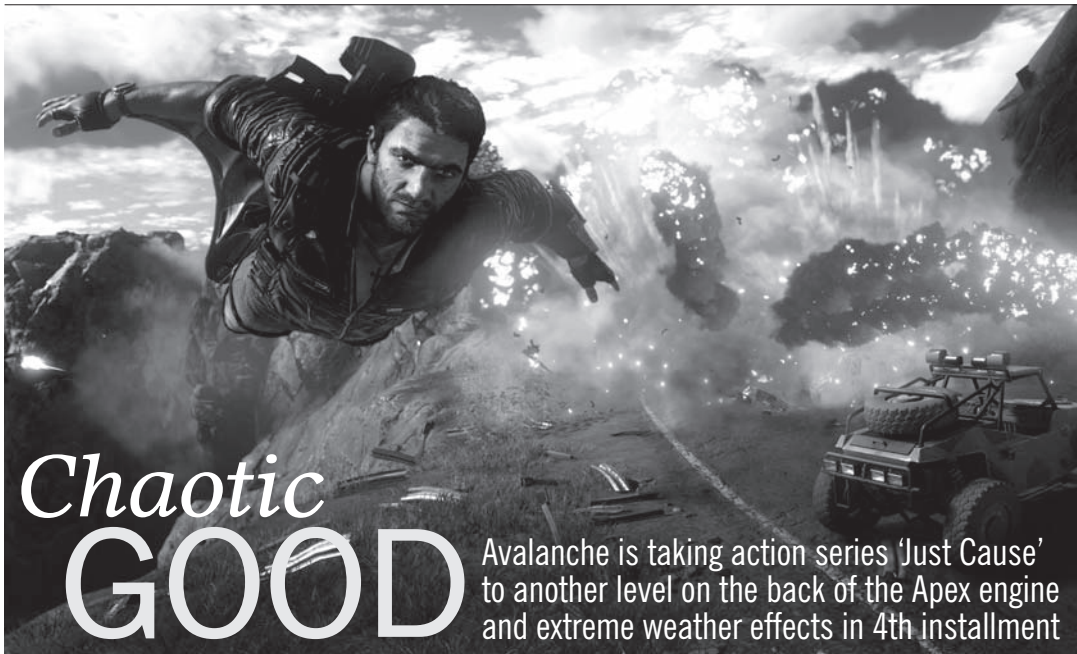
Those words inspired the title of a 1951 song by Gene Autry and a breakup song called "Fade Away, Baby," which apparently was originally titled "Do the MacArthur Baby" by Ray Snead.

Missing from the anthology is "Suicide Is Painless," the iconic theme song from "M*A*S*H," a popular TV show about a group of medics in the war. However, the book opens with a quote from one of the main characters, Capt. Hawkeye Pierce, who was played by Alan Alda.

"War isn't hell. War is war and hell is hell, and of the two of them, war is a lot worse," he says.

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WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Chaotic GOOD

Avalanche is taking action series 'Just Cause' to another level on the back of the Apex engine and extreme weather effects in 4th installment

By CHARLES SINGLETARY JR.
Shacknews.com

Avalanche Studios has consistently upped the ante with each entry of "Just Cause" and the latest shift is, essentially, tossing all of the previous upgrades into a weather-powered blender. "Just Cause 4" is using the new Apex engine and the developers are using the engine's power and flexibility



to add four extreme weather conditions to the series' high-speed and malleable action. Via Apex, Avalanche is also attempting to improve on the game's PC version, upon which this review is based. Does "Just Cause 4" accomplish everything the studio hoped for? Definitely more yes than no.

Watch for the hook

Chaos is king in the "Just Cause" series, but mastering movement is an essential part of this. Switching between on-foot, vehicle, wingsuit, parachute and grapple hook movement is the foundation of the "Just Cause 4" experience, and it works well. I used an Xbox One gamepad and only stumbled slightly before I was flying around with ease.

In "Just Cause 4," the mastering of movement extends out to other objects. The grapple hook's tether has been improved and can now do three things total: tether objects together, attach balloons and attach rocket boosters. There are three loadouts I'm able to modify with a plethora of options, from having balloon-attached objects follow me around to how quickly a tethered line retracts, and these options are added to supply "Just Cause 4" players with massive amounts of creative opportunity for many years to come. Some modifications are locked behind side

quests, but are more than worth the effort.

I made it through the game only having to absolutely use the tether function to progress through the main story, but the balloons and boosts can enhance the conflicts and keep things interesting. Also, there is at least one optional quest line that does encourage the use of the full scope of grapple hook functions. It would have been nice if the main story utilized the full feature set of the grapple hook more.

The game's map is massive and there are a handful of repetitive filler quests to keep things rolling as you take over more of the map and, subsequently, unlock more toys to play around with. Repetitive as they are, the freedom to do almost anything to take down my enemies kept things interesting. If I weren't interested in following the main story, it helps that I'm able to hover over areas and see what unlocks so I can just make a baseline for specific weapons or vehicles I'd like to have airdropped.

Things fall apart

There are many moments when "Just Cause 4" is very pretty. The wingsuit animations are superb, right down to the subtle shifts of the smallest articles of clothing, and there are some beautiful sights to be seen when flying over the game's massive map. When looking at things up close, though, things begin to fall apart.

There's texture inconsistency spread throughout, but the biggest culprit comes from damaged vehicles. Instead of any kind of realistic-looking damage, vehicles initially take on a washed-out texture when damaged and it sticks out like a sore thumb. When completely destroyed, things don't look as bad.

"Just Cause 4" loads incredibly fast for such a massive game, but the trade-off here is assets that pop in and out. Draw distance is very far with varying degrees of visual acuity, but the problem is how enemies, NPCs, vehicles and other objects

suddenly appear and disappear as I moved around.

As far as sound goes, explosions are as impactful as I expected from a "Just Cause" game. Voice actor performances are solid throughout, from the cutscenes to the banter during missions. The downfall comes as a result of repetitive music types, which also results in repetitive interactions. Explosive weapons sound fine, but rifles are missing a bit on the low end.

Weather or not

The issues that I did come across in "Just Cause 4" are almost entirely outnumbered by the cool things that are happening at any given time. Gameplay is as explosive and destructible as ever, but the extreme weather mechanics are the spotlight here. The development team built "Just Cause 4" around four weather conditions: tornadoes, blizzards, sandstorms and heavy rainfall with lightning. All four of different extreme weather conditions are visually stunning and diverse. The tornadoes and rain storms are the most engaging in how they function, which is telltale considering they're the only ones reflected in a weapon counter-part. To explain further, the lightning gun and wind gun are powerful tools that work as expected, but the sand and blizzard effects don't influence gameplay in a way that warrants the inclusion of a gun.

Visually, all four are impressive and they're incredible additions to a game that is already incredibly malleable. Extreme weather in "Just Cause 4" coupled with the new grapple hook functions are going to result in some of the coolest and most creative gameplay clips gaming has ever seen.

The art of storytelling

The game's focus is largely on the action, with narrative not really being high on the list of topics when discussing the series. Nevertheless, the developers of "Just Cause 4" weaved a decently intriguing story around the game's focus on the

weather effects.

Rico Rodriguez is his typical cool self, and he has two consistent supporting characters along for the ride. The two antagonists in "Just Cause 4" are interesting, but neither one of them gets the screen time they deserve. The game doesn't even directly engage either one, which is highly annoying for the secondary villain considering there's a moment where a cutscene sets up what seems like a direct engagement.

I can only speak on my experience with "Just Cause 4" on PC (I played the previous games on PS4). My game crashed a handful of times. This was frustrating, but would have been even more so if the game didn't have a forgiving autosave and checkpoint system. Only once throughout my playthrough did I lose enough progress in a mission to be irritated.

The trade-off for assure pop-in versus quick load times is worth it, but is something that will need to be addressed as the team gets more familiar with the Apex engine. The issues I experienced are things I feel can be tackled easily with a patch, with a couple already being handled day one.

"Just Cause 4" makes the massive gameplay leap that has become customary for the open-world action series and has laid the groundwork for the series' future, but that hasn't come without some growing pains. The Apex Engine opens a lot of doors for the development team, and the new weather system is a clear example of this.

Beyond the occasional crashes and the visual flicker, the game ran fairly well with so many things happening on screen. Overall, "Just Cause 4" is an entertaining package and its potential won't be fully tapped for a long time.

Platforms: PS4, Xbox One, PC

Online: justcause.4game-enix-games.com

Rogue hero Rico Rodriguez lands in Solis to hunt down the truth about his past, at any cost. "In Just Cause 4."

Courtesy of Avalanche

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe



A brew and a view

Sip coffee on a long-dormant volcano in quaint Parkstein, Germany

Visitors to the inactive volcano at Parkstein, Germany, can admire the fascinating basalt columns. The volcano is accessible daily.

PHOTOS BY MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes



The volcano museum provides a history of the hill and features interactive exhibits and eruption simulations.

By MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

Less than 10 minutes away from the Grafenwoehr Training Area is a quaint little village located on a hill — smack in the middle of a dormant volcano.

Still, few Americans in the area seem aware of the existence of the unique site just waiting for visitors.

The village of Parkstein is just about six miles from the post's main gate, through the Manteler Forest. But once you get past the trees, you'll see the volcanic village looming in the distance, jutting out from the flat grounds like a miniature Minas Tirith.

There's plenty to see and do there as you wind your way up. The base of the town is mainly a residential area, but the town's church is there and it has an impressive baroque interior considering Parkstein's small size. It's worth a quick look.

Once you get about midlevel, you'll find a handful of restaurants, a geology museum about the volcano and a really nice coffee shop called Markt and Cafe Parkstein, which serves a great cappuccino.

I highly advise you to grab a coffee to go and make your way around the volcano to admire the fascinating basalt columns on one side. There's also a little shrine to the Virgin Mary carved into one corner.

If you hike up the volcano, you'll find the ruins of a medieval castle. The thick curtain walls now have bright-green moss growing all over, and some of the towers are still mostly intact.

If you keep going up, you'll find a grandiose seat carved out of a tree that looks like it belongs on the set of "Game of Thrones," near a small chapel. All around you are sweeping views of the town and surrounding forests.

The hike to the top isn't challenging if you're relatively fit. But if you'd like to get a workout, you can do as the locals do and hike up and down it a few times, which only takes a few minutes, then grab a beer at one of the gasthauses near the bottom.

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A climb to the top of the volcano is rewarded with a sweeping view of Parkstein.



A carved seat appears near the chapel on top of the volcano.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Parkstein is about six miles from the main gate of the Grafenwoehr Training Area, easily reached via B470.

TIMES

Most restaurants in Parkstein are closed Sundays. The volcano is accessible daily.

COSTS

Volcano access is free.

FOOD

Several cafes and restaurants that serve primarily German cuisine, a bakery and coffee shop.

INFORMATION

Online: parkstein.de

— Martin Egnash

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Andalucia's hill towns: Steeped in Spanish life

When my travel dreams drift off to Spain, they often include visions of Andalucia, the southern part of the country that feels more quintessentially Spanish than perhaps anywhere else. With a string of whitewashed hill towns, sunny skies, vibrant festivals and tempting tapas, Andalucia is the soul of Spain — almost stereotypically so.

Most tourists hit Andalucia's three great cities — Granada, Cordoba and Sevilla — or the Costa del Sol. But for something more authentic, I like exploring the region's interior along the Route of the White Hill Towns (Ruta de los Pueblos Blancos). The middle-size towns that dot this undulating route are more accessible and friendlier than the big cities, but still pack a wallop of delightfully pure Spanish culture. Whether crouching in a ravine or perched atop a hill, each town — painted white to stay cool in scorching summers — has a personality and a story of its own.

Exploring these hill towns is easiest by car, with only the major towns easily accessible by public transportation: Arcos de la Frontera (by bus) and Ronda (by train).

My favorite is Arcos de la Frontera, a photographer's feast. Arcos smoothes its hilltop, tumbling down its back like the train of a wedding dress. The fairy-tale old center is a labyrinthine wonderland, where you can viewpoint-hop all the way down from the hill to feel like you're traveling through the narrow streets as cars inch around tight corners. Around town, I like to peek discreetly into private patios. These wonderful, cool-tiled courtyards, filled with plants, pools and happy family activities, are typical of the whole region.

Arcos' main church — and the town's name (de la frontera means "on the frontier") — are reminders of the Reconquista, the centuries-long fight to take Spain back from the Muslim Moors. After Christian forces retook Arcos, its mosque was demolished and a church was

built on its ruins. Today, these hill towns — no longer strategic — are just passing time peacefully.

From Arcos, a short drive takes you to Ronda: With nearly 35,000 people, it's the most substantial and entertain-

ing home base on the route.

Ronda's main attractions are its gorge-spanning bridges, an intriguing old town and one of the oldest bullrings in Spain (built in 1785). But the real joy lies in exploring Ronda's back streets and taking in its beautiful balconies, wispy gardens and panoramic views. Walking the streets, you can feel a strong local pride and a community where everyone seems to know everyone.

While crowded with day-tripping tourists from the nearby Costa del Sol, late in the day locals reclaim their streets and squares, and a thriving tapas scene takes over.

The dramatic road linking Arcos and Ronda cuts through the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park, famed throughout Spain for its lush and rugged mountain scenery. Within the park lie the towns of Zahara de la Sierra and Grazalema. While Grazalema is the better overnight stop,



Courtesy of Rick Steves

Zahara is a whitewashed Andalusian town with a Moorish castle. The Spanish region's towns are reminders of the struggle to take back the country from the Muslim Moors.

Zahara is a delight for those who want to hear only the sounds of the wind, birds and elderly footsteps on ancient cobbles.

Tiny Zahara, in a tingly setting under a Moorish castle, has a spectacular view over a turquoise reservoir. The town had long been a strategic stronghold for the Moors, and Spanish Reconquista forces considered it the gateway to Granada.

Today, the castle is little more than an evocative ruin with a commanding view.

Grazalema is another postcard-pretty town, offering a royal balcony for a memorable picnic, a square where you can watch old-timers playing cards and plenty of quiet, whitewashed streets to explore. Shops sell the town's beautiful handmade

wool blankets and good-quality leather items from nearby Ubrique. While the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park is known as the rainiest place in Spain, the clouds seem to wring themselves out before they reach the town.

In any of these towns, evening is prime time. The promenade begins as everyone gravitates to the central square. The whole town strolls — it's like "cruising" without cars. Buy an ice cream, join the parade and soak up the essence of Spanish life.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

Rick Steves

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Battle of the Bulge commemorations

Each year it's the same; each year it's slightly different. The Walloon city of Bastogne, nestled in Belgium's woody and mountainous Ardennes region, is the epicenter for "Weekend Nuts," activities commemorating the 74th anniversary of Battle of the Bulge, the last major Nazi offensive against the Allies and the largest battle fought by U.S. forces in World War II. Municipal bodies and history groups, many of whom hail from the Benelux lands, are some of the key players. Dressed in uniforms and driving vehicles of the time, re-enactors evoke the period.

During the ceremonies by the Patton and McAuliffe monuments (3 p.m.) and the throwing of walnuts from the Town Hall balcony (4 p.m.). Highlights for Dec. 16 include an exposition of military vehicles (starting at 1:30 p.m. in the Quartier Latin), followed by a parade of military



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler



vehicles along the Grand Rue starting at 3:30 p.m.

On both days, there's a static display of WWII vehicles at the Bastogne Barracks, along with a militaria market. The Bastogne War Museum hosts an exhibition titled "Through their Eyes" (museum entry costs 14 euros adults, 8 euros children). At the 101st Airborne Museum, a model of a U.S. military encampment is set up, a shop sells militaria, and an American-style barbeque is organized by the American Legion (museum entry costs 8 euros adults, 4 euros children). Making things particularly special this year is Sunday's scheduled meetup with veterans of World War II, among them Vincent Speranza from the 101st Airborne Division (whose WWII heroics landed him on the label of a local beer) and Juergen Together, a German veteran of

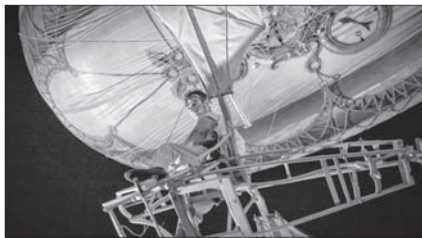
the 506 Panzerabteilung. At 10 a.m., a special ceremony in the presence of the U.S. Ambassador will honor George Merz (818th MP Co., 8th Corps), Ken Butler (26th Infantry Division), Georges Mullins (327th Glider Inf. Regiment, 101st Airborne) and Bob Izumi (101st Airborne).

Online: tinyurl.com/y8sf73uw

Visitors already in place by Friday can see a very special screening of "Searching for Augusta: The Forgotten Angel of Bastogne." This Emmy award-winning documentary directed by Mike Edwards and produced by military historian Martin King follows the quest to uncover the truth about the life of Augusta Chivy. The film's inspiration is taken from the HBO "Band of Brothers" miniseries and a novel by Steven Ambrose in which a black nurse named Anna makes an appearance, then mysteriously vanishes. Martin King himself will attend. This screening takes place at the Bastogne War Museum at 6:30 p.m. Online: bastognemuseum.be/actualites_0.html

Light and champagne in Epernay, France

Under the feet of visitors strolling along Epernay's elegant Avenue de Champagne lies more than 100 kilometers of galleries dug into the chalky underground, where millions of bottles of Champagne slowly come of age. Yet gazes are better directed



Courtesy of Habits De Lumiere

Habits de Lumiere in Epernay, France, combines a celebration of Champagne with illuminations. This year's displays are inspired by Jules Verne's fantastical imagined inventions.

upward through the weekend in the French Champagne region's commercial center, as Habits de Lumiere combines miracles of light with excellence in the glass.

At this charming but chilly annual event, opulent 19th-century buildings in Renaissance and classical styles housing some of the world's most renowned champagne houses serve as the backdrops to artfully executed, night-brightening illuminations. These include 3D projections, aerial sculptures of light and performances by fire artists. This year's displays are inspired by the fantastical flying machines imagined by Jules Verne. Habits De Lumiere plays out Dec. 14-16. The light spectacles

are offered on both Friday and Saturday nights, with pyrotechnical shows set to symphonic music at 8:30 p.m. both evenings. Champagne bars set up in the courtyards of the noble houses are open throughout the day. At the "Habits de saveurs" culinary experience (9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Sat.), chefs exhibit their culinary prowess, and the dishes they've cooked up are served paired with one of the local champagnes. The Vintage Auto Parade showcases more than 400 classic vehicles (cars on display from 8:30 a.m.; parade begins at 11 a.m. Sunday). Entry is free to all events; food and drink cost extra. Online: habitsdelumiere.epernay.fr

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



PHOTOS BY JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

During the winter months, a seasonal menu at Restaurant Zeppelino's in Stuttgart features different goose dishes. Here is a goose breast served with ginger-flavored chickpeas.

After Hours: Germany

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

After a quick glance at the menu, I knew just what I wanted — the roasted venison served in a lingonberry sauce, with a side of brussels sprouts and hazelnut spaetzle.

But it was one of the most expensive things on the menu at Restaurant Zeppelino's in downtown Stuttgart.

When you are someone else's guest, is it rude to pick the priciest thing? And in such cases, does that preclude ordering an appetizer? Agonizing dilemmas.

In the end, social graces gave way to my appetite. The overpriced venison it would be. And for a starter, the miso-marinated salmon.

Restaurant Zeppelino's, across the street from Stuttgart's main station, is part of the swanky Steigenberger Hotel's collection of eateries. The hotel, where out-of-town big shots tend to stay, also has a bar and an upscale fine dining spot called Olivo. Restaurant Zeppelino's falls in the middle of Steigenberger's restaurant offerings when it comes to refinement.

The prices are high. My venison was 29 euros, or about \$34. The dish was very good. The meat was gummy without being funky, and the sauce was rich. The spaetzle was gooey and as good, if not better, than many places that specialize in the Swabian dish.

One of my dining partners ordered a special seasonal plate of goose served with ginger-flavored chickpeas. She liked it a lot. Across the board, our dinner party of about 10 people seemed pleased with their selections. Just not blown away. I heard no "oohs" and "aahs" as my fellow diners chewed.

At more than \$30 a plate, I think the palate deserves a surprise. In that regard, Restaurant Zeppelino's falls a little short. If the meal were on my dime, maybe even shorter.

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Restaurant Zeppelino's is an eatery in downtown Stuttgart that has carefully made but expensive cuisine.



Zeppelino's serves delicious food, but perhaps not quite delicious enough to justify the prices.

RESTAURANT
ZEPPELINO'S

Location: 7 Arnulf-Klett-Platz, Stuttgart, Germany
Hours: 11:30 a.m.-midnight daily

Dress: Business casual
Prices: High. Most main courses are in the \$30 range.

Menu: Available in English
Inform: tinyurl.com/y7s2zrre

— John Vandiver

Don't overlook steam for reliable food prep

BY BONNIE S. BENWICK
The Washington Post

In this era of programmable, appliance-specific cooking, it's easy to overlook one of the most reliable, widely used ways to render food properly: With steam. It's that simple: If you can boil water, you can learn how to steam foods. And that will help make you a better cook.

Steaming has long been considered a healthful way to cook. Steamed vegetables retain more of their nutrients and unique flavor, even when different ones are cooked together. No added fats are needed. The chance you'll overcook ingredients is greatly reduced because of the gentle nature of steam heat, whether it's fish and seafood, whole eggs, dumplings, custards, rice, fruit or even certain cuts of steak.

Pressure cookers and electric multicookers harness the power of steam, of course. But you can steam foods on the stovetop, in a conventional oven and in the microwave, all in fairly short order. Packet, or en papillote, cookery is basically creating a steamy environment on a small scale.

A bain-marie or hot-water bath achieves the same steaming results for foods in ramekins. Bamboo steamer baskets allow for steaming multiple ingredients with one pot or wok, and they can be lined with parchment paper, cheesecloth and edible leaves.

Professional kitchens use special equipment like perforated pans (available at restaurant supply stores and online), but home cooks can achieve the same results with a strainer, saucepan and lid, as well as a simple bamboo steamer. The liquid transformed by heat is typically plain water, but when you add aromatics to it such as lemon grass, ginger and citrus, they can infuse steamed foods with wonderful aromas.

Beer works, too. In a 2015 recipe for The Post Magazine's Plate Lab column, chef-restaurant Victor Albisu chose to steam pork shanks over a citrus-chicken broth-IPA combination instead of braising them. The meat becomes incredibly tender with hours of low-and-slow cooking without falling apart or off the bone as it would when it spends that time submerged in liquid.

Are you ready to give steaming a try? Here's how to handle some foods for which the method works especially well:

Peas. Place fresh or frozen ones in a perforated double-boiler-type pot or in a fine-mesh strainer set over a few inches of simmering water in a pot. Cover and cook for about 20 minutes (add about 30 seconds for frozen), until the peas are a brighter shade of green.

Sticky rice. A glutinous variety of rice or sushi rice typically calls for a long soak and rinsing. Then it takes about 20 minutes of steam heat, in a cheesecloth-lined bamboo steamer over a pot of simmering water. The grains will be lovely and separate.

Frozen rice. Place in a fine-mesh strainer over a pot of simmering water. Cover and defrost until you can break up the block into individual grains.

Winter squash. Cut into thick slices or wedges. Place in a shallow baking dish with 2 to 4 tablespoons of water. Microwave on high for four to six minutes, checking after the first four minutes, until tender enough to pierce with the tip of a knife.

Small potatoes. Place 8 ounces of yellow-fleshed potatoes in a glass or other microwave-safe baking dish with a ¼ cup of water. Cover with a vented glass lid or partially with silicone lid or with vented plastic wrap. Microwave in five-minute increments until fork-tender.

Scallops. Line a bamboo steamer with a few layers of wide lettuce leaves. Place the scallops on the leaves, cover and steam for about eight minutes, or until the scallops are just opaque all the way through.

Tenderloin steak. This method comes from Keith Schroeder, author of "Cooking Light Mad Delicious." Steaming lean medallions takes about eight minutes and cooks them to an even medium-rare, much as sous-vide can accomplish. But steaming also turns the meat an unappetizing color, so Schroeder coats them in a port-wine reduction as soon as they're done. They look and taste restaurant-quality presentable.

Keep in mind that steam heat is intense, so be sure to open or uncover your just-cooked foods with the steam directed away from your face.



GORAN KOSANOVIC/For The Washington Post

If you can boil water, you can learn how to steam foods.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Step by step

In Edinburgh, ceilidh dancing is a great way for travelers to reel in new friends

By EMILY GILLESPIE

Special to The Washington Post

The cheerful melody bellowed from the accordion across the dimly lit room, filling me with jittery anticipation. Holding a hand of each stranger on either side of me, I bounced in a circle to the left and then to the right, doing my best to remember the steps that had just been explained.

I couldn't control my smile as my newfound partners and I went through the motions to the Dashing White Sergeant. We were stomping and clapping, locked-elbow spinning, stepping along a figure-eight-shaped path and ducking under the outstretched arms of other dancers.

When the song ended, I thanked my fellow dancers and went in search of the water fountain. Just one song into my first Scottish ceilidh, and I was already red-faced and sweaty. I was also having more fun than I had imagined.

When my husband and I were planning our trip to Scotland, I emailed his cousins who live in Edinburgh. Among a slew of suggestions of things to do, they included the idea of dancing at a ceilidh, a Gaelic word pronounced KAY-lee that simply means gathering or party, and often features singing and dancing as well.

I mentally put the idea at the top of my list. For me, a highlight of traveling is meeting and talking to new people. The conventions of tourism, however, often make it difficult to interact with locals who aren't trying to cater to you in some manner.

But in a ceilidh dance, I saw an opportunity to really connect with people who call Scotland home and get a taste of the country's culture in a genuine fashion. The experience didn't disappoint.

We lucked into last-minute tickets to a ceilidh held every week at Summerhall, an event venue in Edinburgh about a mile south of the Royal Mile. Before leaving I'd done a quick Google search, which revealed that I was likely to get hot and that wayward dancers have been known to step on toes. I opted for a lightweight dress and close-toed shoes. Aside from that, I arrived with little knowledge about what the actual dancing was like. It wasn't difficult to learn, though; one of the members of the band playing traditional Scottish music explained how to do each dance before the music began. I didn't even dance with my husband during the first few



EMILY GILLESPIE/For The Washington Post

Even someone without experience can participate in a Scottish ceilidh, because a member of the band explains how to do each dance before the music begins.

songs. Many dances, like the Dashing White Sergeant, are done in groups that range in size from three to eight. By forcing you to interact with other people in the room, ceilidh dancing breaks down barriers.

The atmosphere held an electric excitement that I could see on the faces of everyone around me. There's something supremely satisfying about coordinating your movements in time to music and in sync with everyone around you. Not to mention the hilarity that comes with realizing that the kilt of a burly man floating by me twirled better than the dress of his dance partner.

Most of the more than 100 people who showed up for the dance wore casual clothing and appeared to be as much of a novice as I was. The burly man, however, was among a group of about 10 people who knew the steps to every song and were more formally dressed: the men in kilts and white collared shirts, the women in dresses.

During a break in the music, I approached one of the kilts to find out if he was with the band — maybe meant to be a guidepost for newcomers. No, he answered, he and his friends were just regulars. I began to ask him more questions, but when I was interrupted by the music to the next song, he invited me to get a beer with him and his friends afterward at a bar down the street.

Of course I said yes. Over a pint, my husband and I were treated like friends as we chatted with the group. They asked me if I'd enjoyed myself and I struggled to find words that would convey how much fun I'd had. Doing the jigs, twirls and do-si-dos had left me bursting with chest-welling happiness that took me back to the elation of being a kid running through a sprinkler.

From their expressions, I knew they understood. As we got to know each other over the next few weeks, I learned more about their relationship to ceilidhs.

The man who had invited me out, Donald MacLennan, told me he grew up ceilidh dancing at a town hall in his small town on the Isle of Mull.

Ceilidhs fell out of favor when he was about 18, as discos or nightclubs became all the rage, MacLennan explained. It wasn't until he moved to Edinburgh 10 years ago that he was reintroduced to ceilidh dancing. Fresh from a sports injury, MacLennan saw it as a way to stay fit, but it became much more than that.

"With me being new to Edinburgh, to go to a ceilidh, you start finding a lot of good friends," he said. "I could go out at night and meet someone at a pub, chat with them a few minutes, and then off they go. But if you've been dancing with them through the night, you've got quite a good connection with them."

Almost everyone stays sober, MacLennan added, as your coordination is necessary and that has an important effect on the atmosphere.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

KNOW & GO

Edinburgh Ceilidh Club
Online: edinburghceilidhclub.com

This group holds dances every Tuesday at Summerhall, though some are occasionally also held on Fridays. A small number of tickets are released the day of the event. Tickets cost about \$9.

Edinburgh Ceilidhs
Online: edinburghceilidhs.net

Ceilidh dances throughout the city are included on this calendar of concerts and other dance events. Some events are organized with a few weeks notice, so check back for updates.

Ghillie-Dhu
2 Rutland Pl., Edinburgh
011-131-222-9930

Online: ghillie-dhu.co.uk/ceilidhs

This bar hosts the Burly Ceilidh Club every Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m. Admission costs about \$45, which includes a three-course meal.

Mike's Community
Online: mikescommunity.com

Mike Scott, an avid ceilidh dancer, started this site as a way to keep track of all the ceilidh dances in Edinburgh. Ceilidh dancers and organizers submit information about upcoming events — ceilidhs can be found on nearly every day of the week.

The List
Online: list.co.uk/events/ceilidhs
Ceilidhs are held throughout Scotland, though they tend to be concerts in the Highlands of north Scotland and dances in the Lowlands of southern Scotland. This website lists events around Britain, including ceilidhs, but be sure to read the event description first to know which type of ceilidh is being held.

Stramash
207 Cowgate, Edinburgh
011-131-623-4353

Online: stramashedinburgh.com

This bar in the Cowgate area of Edinburgh hosts free ceilidh dances daily. Admission is free.

FROM PAGE 30

"Everybody's just more chilled out," he said. "There's no age barrier. A 60- or 70-year-old guy can ask a 20-year-old girl to dance, and she's quite happy doing it and it goes the other way."

I knew what he meant. The ceilidh I attended had a wholesome feel. It was nothing like dancing at a nightclub, which can include costly drinks, grinding bodies and drunk men trying to convince women to come home with them.

Another dancer at the bar that first night, Kevin Dempsey, smoothed down his kilt to show the overlapping pattern of black, green and blue, with small strips of red and yellow. The pattern is a tartan, he explained, and represents his family surname and place they're from. Each clan has a tartan that belongs only to them.

Later, Dempsey told me that he had a different experience growing up with ceilidh dancing than MacLennan had. He was taught the steps in school, and attendance at an annual ceilidh was mandatory. "It was really a cringe experience; we were not into the ceilidh music," he said. "I wasn't mature enough to appreciate it."

Now, he said, he goes to as many ceilidhs as he can find. They're just plain fun, he said, and he likes how it allows him to meet people from all demographics. "People who are maybe (a) different skin color, different religion, different background ... you dance with them all," he said. "You dance with everyone."

Ceilidhs have a rich history in Scotland. In the early 1900s, ceilidhs were held in a village's designated "ceilidh house," and the gatherings included playing cards, storytelling and singing and often ended with young people dancing, according to "Traditional Step-Dancing in Scotland" by J.F. and T.M. Flett.

Learning ceilidh dancing in school, as Dempsey did, is probably what has kept these dances popular, said David Francis, associate director of Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland. That, and the fact that they remain a traditional part of a Scottish wedding.

Today, ceilidhs in the northern Highlands tend to be concerts, while in the southern Lowlands, they tend to be dances. Edinburgh is somewhat of an epicenter for ceilidh dancing, with regular ceilidh dances held around the city.

"There's something qualitatively different about ceilidh dancing," Francis said. "The reason why people still dance like that is because it's sociable; it's very convivial; the music is a reference back to tradition."

Having experienced that difference, I agree. On our trip to Scotland, we visited the Edinburgh Castle, encountered a herd of Highland cattle and hiked along the Cuillin mountain range on the Isle of Skye. But ceilidh dancing was easily my favorite part.

And it taught me that there might be no faster way to grow a kinship with someone from a different culture than by taking their hand and stepping together to music.

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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific

Precious stones

Oahu's Kukaniloko Birthstones State Monument offers the chance to explore the birthplace of Hawaiian royalty

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Treading the five-acre Kukaniloko Birthstones State Monument is to stroll upon the bellybutton of Oahu island.

Ancient Hawaiians referred to this spot among the high plains as the island's piko, or navel, as it is the general geographical center of Oahu, roughly equidistant from the coasts to the north and south.

It was here, long before the first Europeans stepped foot on this island chain, where the pregnant wives of Hawaii's chiefs came to give birth upon a large boulder in hopes that the newborn would attain the highest-ranking status in Hawaiian society. The practice lasted for about 600 years before ending sometime in the late 1700s.

Today, the Kukaniloko Birthstones State Monument is surrounded by sugarcane fields — but the site, which was first listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 before becoming a state park in 1992, is well maintained. Visitors can easily wander the scenic grassy clearing, although some areas are marked as off limits due to their sacred significance for native Hawaiians.

The roughly 180 or so birthing boulders that remain at the park are nestled between the Ko'olau Mountain Range to the west and Wa'anae Mountain Range to the east.

A few of the boulders are etched with petroglyphs, leading some researchers to hypothesize that the original layout of the stones had astronomical significance — a Hawaiian Stonehenge, perhaps.

The ancients believed the centrality of the site

created a focused spiritual energy that would impart the means to a long and prosperous reign upon the children born there. The Oahu site was one of only two birthing places for high-ranking Hawaiians, with the other located on Kauai.

Three dozen chiefs, one of them the father of the newborn, would be in attendance to witness the birth and attest to the parents' royal stock. Assisted by midwives, the pregnant mother would brace herself against the so-called massive Kukaniloko stone during contractions. Kukaniloko, from which the park's name is derived, can be translated as meaning "to anchor the cry from within."

S. M. Kamakau, a 19th-century Hawaiian historian, offered up a detailed account of the royal affair: "If a chiefess entered and leaned against Kukaniloko and rested on the supports to hold up the thighs in observance of [the birthing ritual], the child born in the presence of chiefs was called an ali, an akua, a wela — a chief, a god, a blaze of heat," Kamakau wrote.

The existing site is just a small portion of a larger complex — much of which was lost as Oahu's plains were converted to raising pineapples and sugarcane in the 1800s.

Hawaiian royalty, however, continued to revere the site even after the birthing ritual was no longer held there.

For example, Kamehameha II, the second king of the Kingdom of Hawaii, asked his highest-ranking wife to travel from Hawaii Island to Oahu to give birth to their first child at Kukaniloko in 1797, according to information that accompanied the application to the National Park Service for listing the birthstone site on the National Register of Historic Places.



A path at Kukaniloko Birthstones State Monument leads to one of the larger boulders, where local Hawaiians often leave flowers and other offerings.

Alas, she fell ill and could not make the trip — thus eventually giving birth to the king's heir, Liholiho, in Hilo, Hawaii. (Liholiho's own journey as a king to visit the site was stymied by a thicket of armyworms.)

The collection of stones that now make up the state-owned park were first set aside in 1909 by the Wahiawa Agricultural Company, whose owner believed they should be preserved in some manner. The Daughters of Hawaii civic group acquired the property in 1925.

The Hawaiian Civic Club of Wahiawa has cared for the grounds for the past 60 years.

A stroll around the monument takes only about a half hour — a short detour on a drive through Oahu's North Shore. It's a far cry from the auspicious pilgrimage once made by the ancient royals — but a visit to Kukaniloko Birthstones State Monument is sure to please anyone interested in or passionate about this state's unique and storied history.

olson.wyatt@stripes.com
Twitter: @WyattWOLson

ON THE QT

LOCATION

The Kukaniloko Birthstones State Monument is located on the northern outskirts of downtown Wahiawa at the intersection of Kamehameha Highway and Whitmore Avenue. There is no official address.

DIRECTIONS

From downtown Honolulu, drive west along the H-1 freeway toward central Oahu before taking Exit 8 onto Kamehameha Highway. After exiting the freeway, drive for one mile before arriving at the intersection with Whitmore Avenue. The entrance to the park is on the right. There is no parking lot, so most visitors park on the highway shoulder.

TIMES

While there are no official posted hours, visiting during the daytime allows for the easiest access.

COSTS

Free

FOOD

No food or beverages are allowed on-site.

INFORMATION

Wear shoes suitable for walking that you don't mind getting muddy. It rains frequently in this part of Oahu — so bring an umbrella.

— Wyatt Olson



PHOTOS BY WYATT OLSON/Stars and Stripes

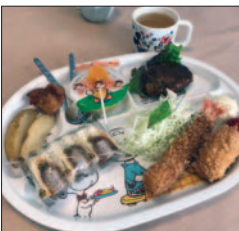
Fields of sugarcane and pineapples surround the grounds of Kukaniloko Birthstones State Monument, where high-ranking Hawaiian royals in ancient times gave birth. The preserved site today is just a small portion of what existed.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific



The Kurobota Katsu-Don at Maisen serves up tender tonkatsu and a fluffy egg over a bowl of rice.



The Okosama Lunch, or the children's lunch set, includes a little of everything.



Kurobota (black pork) tonkatsu served at Maisen has crispy bread crumbs and tender and juicy pork.

After Hours: Japan

BY HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

Many foodies who visit Japan expect their meals to be filled with the likes of sushi and ramen, the most common forms of Japanese cuisine served abroad. But there's a wide range of Japanese fare beyond these staples — and one of the most popular among locals is tonkatsu.

A simple dish comprised of a pork cutlet that's been breaded and deep-fried, tonkatsu challenges the stereotype that suggests Japanese food is always healthy. The name itself combines "ton," an old Japanese word for pig, and "katsuretsu," a transliteration of the word cutlet.

Though it was adapted from Western cuisine more than 100 years ago, the dish is now a common offering at many traditional Japanese eateries — including Maisen, one of the most famous tokatsu chains in Japan.

Maisen is famous for tonkatsu made with pork so tender, the pieces can be easily cut with a chopstick. That tenderness was integral to the type of tonkatsu that founder Chiyoiko Koide wanted to serve. She opened Maisen in a small basement with only a few counter seats in 1965.

According to Maisen's website, the secret to its tender tonkatsu comes from a special preparation in which the meat is patted before the breading process. The bread crumbs used for Maisen's breading are special, too, coming from a unique bread recipe that's baked fresh daily.

Maisen's main shop is located in the upscale Tokyo neighborhood of Otomotesando in a converted old bathhouse — making a visit to the restaurant a unique experience. The first-floor dining

area maintains the bathhouse's original architecture, with entrance doors separated by gender and high, coffered ceilings a main feature of the interior.

When my family and I dined at Maisen on a recent Japanese holiday, we were unsurprised to find a long line outside the restaurant. Our wait was about 30 minutes. Diners should expect waits on weekdays, too — especially during peak lunch hours.

Maisen offers several variations of tonkatsu, which utilize different cuts of pork. Diners can expect to find the standard cuts found at most tonkatsu restaurants, including "hire," a tender and lean fillet or tenderloin, and "rosu," a juicy and fatty loin cut.

If you're looking for a slightly premium cut of pork, Maisen offers limited servings of Amai-Yuwaku and Tokyo X-brand pork cutlets, which both range in price from 2,400 yen to 3,200 yen (or about \$21.30 to \$28.40), based on the size of the cutlet ordered. Amai-Yuwaku is pork specially bred for the restaurant and is limited to just five servings per day.

Maisen's signature pork offering, however, is kurobota (3,100 yen). This cut comes from Berkshire-bred black pork and, according to the waitress, is tender but not as sweet as the Amai-Yuwaku.

The restaurant's tonkatsu sets come with the standard accompaniments of shredded cabbage, rice, miso soup and Japanese pickles. Hungry diners will appreciate the unlimited refills of rice and cabbage.

I ordered the 130-gram set with Kurobota Hire-katsu Zen (3,100 yen). While Maisen offers an option to add a sweet or spicy sauce, this dish came with a special sauce utilizing grated apple for added sweetness.

The tonkatsu was crispy, and the pork's tenderness took me by surprise. The sweeter sauce paired quite well with the kurobota tonkatsu, and the juicy pork was delicious and filling.

My 7-year-old daughter ordered the Kurobota Katsu-Don (1,630 yen), a classic Japanese dish featuring a bowl of rice topped with tonkatsu and egg. She loved the dish so much, that she almost finished the generous serving of rice and tonkatsu — which the waiter warned was probably too much food for her.

For my 4-year-old daughter, we opted for the Okosama Lunch (900 yen) — a children's lunch set that includes the restaurant's famous Hire-katsu Sando, or lean tonkatsu sandwich. (An adult-sized version is 490 yen for three pieces, and 980 yen for six pieces.)

The children's set also comes with a variety of small side dishes, including deep-fried shrimp; a croquette with cream filling; French fries; karaage, or fried chicken; a small hamburger steak; shredded cabbage; and potato salad. My daughter couldn't finish, but she enjoyed the sandwich the most. Still, the wide selection of items will be sure to please even the pickiest eater.

For those who do not eat pork, Maisen also serves non-tonkatsu dishes — including sashimi, soba, fried chicken and omelettes.

Unlike many restaurants in Japan, Maisen is completely family-friendly. High chairs are available for younger children, and the restrooms are equipped with diaper-changing tables.

If you do not like waiting in line, check out the small stand outside the restaurant, which offers sandwiches and lunchboxes for takeout.

kusumoto.hana@stripes.com



PHOTOS BY HANA KUSUMOTO/Stars and Stripes

Customers enjoy tonkatsu at Maisen's large dining area. The restaurant was renovated from a bath house in 1983.

MAISEN

LOCATION: 4-8-5 Jingumae,

Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

DIRECTIONS: Maisen is accessible via the Tokyo Metro

Chiyoda, Ginza and Hanzon-

mon lines at Otomotesando

Station (3-minute walk) or the

JR Yamanote line at Harajuku

Station (10-minute walk).

HOURS: Open daily from 11

a.m. to 10:45 p.m., with last

order at 10 p.m.

PRICES: Tokatsu sets range

in price based on the size and

type of pork cutlet chosen.

Most sets begin at 1,700 yen

(about \$15) and can go as high

as 3,960 yen.

DRESS: Casual.

INFORMATION: mai-sen.

com/restaurant

— Hana Kusumoto

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STARS AND STRIPES

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WEEKEND: MOVIES

GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

Shameik Moore slings webs as first black Spider-Man in 'Into the Spider-Verse'

IT'S A NEW TIME
IN HOLLYWOOD.
... I'M HONORED
TO BE THE
FIRST BLACK
SPIDER-MAN
(IN A FILM).

BY JONATHAN LANDRUM JR.
Associated Press

A journal entry penned when Shameik Moore was teenager laid out one of his dreams — to play Spider-Man on the big screen. That dream is now partially realized with Moore serving as the voice of the web-slinger in the new animated film, "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse."

Moore plays Miles Morales, a biracial Brooklyn teen who gains an array of superpowers after being bitten by a radioactive spider. Morales melds his superpowers, including enhanced hearing, wall-crawling and camouflage abilities — while putting his own stamp on the character. Gone are Peter's Parker's blue-and-red outfits, replaced by a red-and-black version and a cool pair of sneakers.

Moore's ambition was to be the face of Spider-Man in a live-action film, something he still hopes will happen. But for now, he's happy to serve as Morales' voice in "Into the Spider-Verse."

"The story now is coming out through me. So with great power, comes great responsibility," he said, referencing an oft-repeated line from the Spider-verse of film and comics. "It's a black Spider-Man, and he looks like me.

"It's a new time in Hollywood," said Moore, who is 23 and of Jamaican descent. "Not only are we in live-action superhero movies, but they are animating us now," he said. "I'm honored to be the first black Spider-Man (in a film)."

"Into the Spider-Verse" last week was nominated by the Golden Globes for best animated film, and has generated some Oscar buzz that could lead to a super-

hero showdown with "Incredibles 2" and "Ralph Breaks the Internet." It boasts a 99 percent rating on Rotten Tomatoes and has drawn rave reviews for its visual style and deftly managing of a storyline that features six distinct versions of Spider-Man. The multiple Spideys team up to thwart a plot by Marvel supervillain Kingpin, who hatches a plan to wreak havoc across multiple realities.

Moore almost had a divergent path to becoming Spider-Man. He first auditioned to play the webslinger years ago with other multiracial candidates, but the role of Spider-Man and his alter-ego Peter Parker ultimately went to Tom Holland, who made his debut in "Captain America: Civil War," anchored the stand-alone film "Spider-Man: Homecoming" and had a key role in "Avengers: Infinity War."

The actor's fascination with Morales started after seeing Donald Glover voice the character on Disney's "Ultimate Spider-Man" a few years ago. The character was introduced in comic books in 2011 after President Barack Obama and Glover, inspired by Morales' creation, sported Spider-Man pajamas on a different TV show.

Moore recalled how director Rick Faminuyiwa, who cast him in the 2015 film "Dope," considered him to play Morales in a live-action film, but he said those plans were scrapped after "somebody in power got switched around" and decided to make it an animated film.

Producers of "Spider-Verse" said they went the animation route because computer graphic illustrators could mimic comic book movements better. With the process of blending CGI and hand-drawn animation, it took three years to develop "Into the Spider-Verse."

"Our animation is so exaggerated that the best stuntman in world couldn't do it," said Chris Miller, who co-produced the film with Phil Lord, one of its co-writers. "At least in this film, he can move the same way as the comics. If anything, this doesn't box out a live-action Miles movie. It actually brings more awareness to it."

Moore says he hopes it happens sooner than later.

"I'm very physical. I don't need the mask to do flips," he said. "I won't need a stunt double. ... But if they take like six, seven years, I'll be older and won't be able to play it."

Regardless of awards or box office success, "Spider-Verse" cast members believe the film will inspire audiences. The movie explores Morales' biracial culture and upbringing of the character that swings around the city wearing Air Jordan sneakers.

"I can't imagine if I was a kid and there was a black or brown Spider-Man, I would have been so excited," said Oscar-winning actor Mahershala Ali, who is the voice of Morales' uncle Aaron Davis aka Prowler. "This opens doors for a different generation to sort of believe in different possibilities. There's a generation that came into the world knowing Barack Obama was their president, and never thought it was strange or a huge feat. Hopefully, this can be the same."

If "Spider-Verse" is successful, more films could follow.

"I think the studios would be very excited to make more of these," said Peter Ramsey, co-director with Rodney Rothman and Bob Persichetti. "Right now, it still has to come out and allow the audience to fall in love with it. There's so much potential."

INVISION/AP

WEEKEND: MOVIES

‘Spider-Verse’ injects new life into franchise

By KATIE WALSH

Tribune News Service

“Spider-Man” is the superhero franchise that may suffer the most from reboot fatigue. In the past 16 years, there have been six Spider-Man movies starring three different actors as Peter Parker, with another on the way. Could we really stand yet another Spider-Man movie? Animated feature “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” is here to prove new life can be injected into the franchise, by reminding us all where Spider-Man comes from: the comic books.

Right away, “Spider-Verse,” directed by Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey and Rodney Rothman, with a screenplay by Phil Lord, reveals itself to be a completely different animal, unlike any other superhero or animated film that has come before. The animation style is like watching a comic book come to life. The characters look hand-drawn, with distinctive strokes and lines. The images even have a pointillist style reminiscent of the Ben-Day dots paper printing technique, complete with red-blue aura around the characters. There’s a tactile sense of a comic book page on the screen, fluidly rendered, with an ingenious use of text boxes, married with a technologically and aesthetically outsize style. The climax is a wild and colorful head-trip of neon and pastel, a big bang fight scene exploding in pink and



SONY PICTURES ANIMATION/AP

A Brooklyn teen dons a mask and joins forces with arachnid-like superheroes from other dimensions in the computer-animated “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse.”

green and blue and purple.

“Spider-Verse” also firmly exists in a post-“Deadpool” environment, where it seems the only fresh way into a century-old superhero is to skewer the tropes, make fun of the merchandising and acknowledge the cultural significance of it all in a cheeky and self-reflective manner. Don’t worry, Spidey isn’t as crude, violent or nihilistic as Deadpool, but this is a universe where Peter Parker exists as

a cultural icon, one that could take a good ribbing or two.

This universe is a multi-verse — a “spider-verse,” if you will — and the story clashes together all the different Spider-people that have proliferated throughout the comic books. Our hero is Miles Morales (Shameik Moore), an Afro-Latino kid from Brooklyn whose father is a cop. Peter Parker (Chris Pine) exists in his world, and there’s a Peter B. Parker (Jake Johnson)

from an alternate universe who crashes in when the evil mobster Kingpin (Liev Schreiber) fires up a portal to another dimension to bring back his family. Spider-Gwen (Hailee Steinfeld), Spider-Man Noir (Nicolas Cage), Spider-Ham, aka Peter Porker (John Mulaney), and the anime-inspired Peni Parker (Kim Cattrall) all crash the party too, helping Miles get in touch with his new abilities and inner hero.

It’s so refreshing to have a character like Miles in the lead, and his relationships, particularly with his father (Brian Tyree Henry) and uncle (Mahershala Ali), have real heart and stakes. Johnson balances that with his hilarious take on washed-up Peter B. Parker, who’s packed on a few pounds and shows Miles the ropes in his sweatpants. The smart and sly Spider-Gwen is also incredible, in her hooded suit and ballet shoes.

The key to the balance of self-aware and sweet is Lord, who, along with his writing/directing partner Chris Miller, penned the incredibly smart “The Lego Batman Movie.” There’s a deep sense of love for the characters and tropes, but also a willingness to have some fun with it. Not all superhero robots need to be gritty and dark, and the delights of “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” lie in the newfound sense of joy and playfulness to the beloved character.

“Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” is rated PG for frenetic sequences of animated action violence, thematic elements and mild language. Running time: 117 minutes.

From Spider-Man to Spider-Ham, there’s a hero for everyone

By TRACY BROWN

Los Angeles Times

It’s a familiar origin story: A teenager gets bitten by a radioactive spider, gains enhanced spider-related abilities and becomes a costumed crime fighter.

But “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” offers a new take on this well-trod formula by introducing young Miles Morales, a black-Latino teenager trying to adjust to life at a new school.

It turns out that there are many versions of this story across the multiverse, and each reality in the vast web of alternate dimensions has its own Spidey-hero. In “Into the Spider-Verse,” some of these Spider-Men, Spider-Women and even Spider-Ham come together to try to save the world. This doesn’t surprise readers of the many Spider-Man comic books who know that Peter Parker is only one version of the radioactive superhero.

Here are some of the most intriguing web-slingers.

Peter Parker

Introduced as a high school prodigy, young Peter Parker is bitten by a radioactive spider and gains superpowers. With newfound strength, speed, endurance and the ability to crawl up walls, Peter becomes the friendly neighborhood hero known as Spider-Man. But he soon learns that with his new powers come great responsibilities.

Co-created by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko, Spider-Man made his comic book debut in 1962 in “Amazing Fantasy” No. 15.

In many of Marvel’s universes, a version of Peter Parker is Spider-Man. This includes the many incarnations that have appeared in pop culture, which are generally based on the Peter from Earth-616. Tobey Maguire played the titular hero in a trilogy of “Spider-Man” films that kicked off in 2002. In 2012, “The Amazing Spider-Man” saw Andrew Garfield take on the role in the rebooted franchise. Since 2016, Tom Holland has played the Marvel Cinematic Universe’s incarnation of the character.

Peter Parker’s Spider-Man has also appeared in a number of animated TV shows starting with the 1967 “Spider-Man” cartoon. Nicholas Hammond played a live-action hero in “The Amazing Spider-Man” series that aired in 1977-79.

Miles Morales

In an alternate universe (Earth-1610) where Peter Parker was already fighting crime as Spider-Man, young Miles Morales was bitten by a genetically enhanced spider that was accidentally stolen by his uncle.

The teen soon develops Spidey-powers of his own including the familiar enhanced strength, speed and reflexes, plus camouflage and

the ability to stun his enemies with a bioelectric charge. Miles, like so many reluctant heroes, just wants to be “normal.” But after watching Parker get killed in battle, Miles realizes the weight of responsibility that comes with his powers and becomes the new Spider-Man.

Co-created by writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Sara Pichelli, Miles first appeared in 2011’s “Ultimate Fallout” No. 4. In addition to leading his own solo comic book titles, Miles has appeared in animated form on TV shows such as “Ultimate Spider-Man.”

Gwen Stacy

Gwen Stacy was originally introduced as Peter Parker’s friend and love interest in the 1970s. It turns out that in one universe (Earth-65), Gwen is the teen who was bitten by the radioactive spider, not Peter.

She uses her newfound powers to fight crime as Spider-Woman and quickly learns that life as a superhero comes with its own difficulties. Peter is killed when his experiment to gain superpowers of his own goes awry.

Spider-Gwen debuted in 2013’s “Edge of Spider-Verse” No. 2 by Jason Latour and Robbi Rodriguez. She’s appeared in animated form on shows such as “Ultimate Spider-Man” and (with the code name Ghost-Spider) in “Marvel Rising: Initiation.”

Emma Stone played the non-Spidey Gwen in “The Amazing Spider-Man” films. A civilian Gwen also appeared in the 2007 film “Spider-Man 3,” played by Bryce Dallas Howard.



Spider-Man Noir

Spider-Man Noir is a Depression-era Peter Parker from an alternate world (Earth-90214) who gains his powers from a mystical spider bite.

This Spider-Man wields firearms and is not fundamentally opposed to killing the enemies to get the job done.

Created by David H. Fibrice, Fabrice Sapolsky and Carmine Di Giandomeni, Spider-Man Noir first appeared in his own miniseries that kicked off in late 2008.



Peni Parker

In a futuristic world (Earth-14512), getting bitten by a genetically compatible radioactive spider gives Peni Parker the ability to pilot SP//dr, a mecha, or human-controlled robot, inherited from her father.

Other than Peni’s family’s involvement, not much is known about the organization behind the tech. Peni juggles school and crimefighting — she just does it in a crimefighting suit. Peni Parker and SP//dr first appeared in 2014’s “Edge of Spider-Verse” No. 5 by writer Gerard Way and artist Jake Wyatt.



Spider-Ham

One day, in an alternate world (Earth-8311) populated by anthropomorphic animals, a spider named Peter was bitten by a radioactive pig (May Porker). Peter then transformed into a pig but retained his spider-like abilities. He took on the last name Porker, and eventually became the crime fighter Spider-Ham.

Created by Tom DeFalco and Mark Armstrong, Spider-Ham debuted in 1983’s one-shot “Marvel Comics Starline” featuring the Spectacular Spider-Man.

WEEKEND: MOVIES



Nicole Kidman plays a damaged Los Angeles cop tracking down an old nemesis in "Destroyer."

Annapurna Pictures



In "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" Melissa McCarthy stars as Lee Israel, the celebrity biographer who made her living in the 1970s and '80s profiling the likes of Katharine Hepburn, Tallulah Bankhead, Estee Lauder and journalist Dorothy Kilgallen.

Fox Searchlight Pictures



An unusual set of circumstances brings unexpected success to a pop star in "Vox Lux," starring Natalie Portman, left, and Raffey Cassidy.

Nico

Goodbye, good girls

A bumper crop of movies featuring powerful, sometimes unlikable women — including 'Can You Forgive Me?' and 'Destroyer' — present opportunities, maybe a few pitfalls

BY ANN HORNADAY
The Washington Post

In "The Favourite," Olivia Colman, Rachel Weisz and Emma Stone play Queen Anne, Sarah Churchill and Abigail Hill, three women sparring, seducing and strategizing their way through the corridors of power in 17th-century England.

More cynical than the bleakest "House of Cards" episode with twice as many deliciously nasty zingers, "The Favourite" is just the latest sprout in a bumper crop of movies depicting women, if not at their best, then at least in some form of sisterly solidarity: From the depraved sisterhood of "Suspiria" to Viola Davis coolly leading a team of henchwomen in "Widows," 2018 is shaping up to be a year singularly devoted to the vicarious pleasures of feminist troublemaking.

Throw in such tough protagonists as Emily Blunt in "A Quiet Place," Jamie Lee Curtis in "Halloween," Melissa McCarthy in "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" and Rosamund Pike in "A Private War," and the trend is clear: Good girls are Out. Difficult women — preferably ones who can defy social expectations to drink, swear, misbehave and screw up a storm — are decidedly In.

In the not-too-distant past, we saw Charlize Theron's gorgeously androgynous Furiosa in "Mad Max: Fury Road" or Frances McDormand's fierce, foulmouthed, Oscar-winning turn in "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" as galvanizing outliers, their grim machisma a welcome antidote to the hypersexualized or tiresomely passive roles usually on offer from Hollywood.

Now, what was once transgressive has become a trope: Just wait until you get a load of Nicole Kid-



Universal Pictures

Forty years later, Jamie Lee Curtis returns to her iconic role as Laurie Strode, who comes to her final confrontation with Michael Myers in "Halloween."

man playing a bruised, beat-up-looking alcoholic in "Destroyer" or Natalie Portman's unattractive and unrepentant diva in "Vox Lux." In the films "Ben Is Back" and "Vice," as well as "Private Life," currently playing on Netflix, even conventional wife-and-mother roles come spiked with generous doses of spiky anger or quiet political maneuvering.

Interestingly, many if not most of these movies were conceived and greenlighted a few years ago, when their producers no doubt thought that they'd be perfectly timed to celebrate America's first female president. Not only did that not come to pass, but the Harvey Weinstein scandal and #MeToo movement completely upended the context in which they're being received. "Is (that) connected to how we are getting our stories told now?" Weisz reflected in an interview with five other actresses in the Hollywood Reporter last month. "I can't figure out the chicken and the egg."

That confusion extends to the mixed messages of the content itself. Seen through one lens, "Vice" can be commended for giving Lynne Cheney her due as a scholar and ambitious conservative ideologue in her own right — not to mention the figure behind the transformation of Dick Cheney from a dissolute, unfocused young man to vice president. Similarly, the women of "The Favourite" prove themselves to be capable of pragmatism and shrewd gamesmanship, even as they go along with the farcical notion that the men are in charge.

The filmmakers are confident that viewers will be in on the joke. But, as delicious as these characterizations can be, they also perpetuate notions of "subversiveness" that are relegated to whispered asides and neurotic machinations, with strategy reduced to scheming, process to petty manipulation. Face it: Simple professionalism, competence and skill are rarely deemed sexy enough to qualify as entertainment.

Then again, perhaps that contradiction is utterly of a piece with a time when the American public — especially men — still report discomfort with the idea of a female president, and when women account for a vanishingly small number of corporate leaders.

Will this year's fiercely capable heroines make us more willing to accept female power, or more frightened of it? It's hard to figure out the chicken and the egg. For now, it's clear that we've gotten the cinematic trope this era deserves, one that encapsulates aspirations and ambivalence in maddeningly equal measure.

WEEKEND: MOVIES



Universal Pictures

In *"Mortal Engines,"* set hundreds of years after a cataclysmic event has destroyed civilization, roving "predator cities" on caterpillar treads devour everything in their paths. Starring Hera Hilmar and Hugo Weaving.

'Mortal Engines' a bloated, stale post-apocalyptic tale

By MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN
The Washington Post

The 23rd-century world of *"Mortal Engines"* looks great: a fabulous and richly textured steampunk dystopia of haves and have-nots straight out of H.G. Wells. Populated, on the one side, by people in frock coats festooned with gold braid and, on the other, begrimed laborers in goggles and grease-smear coversalls or thrift-store chic, it's a pleasure to watch — with the sound off.

The story is bloated and, despite flashes of imagination, overly familiar. And the dialogue, peppered with well-worn catchphrases like "We didn't start this, but we will finish it," is an assault on the brain, by way of the ear.

Adapted from Philip Reeve's 2001 book by writers Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens (who also produced), and directed by first-time filmmaker Christian Rivers (a longtime art-department collaborator of Jackson's on the director's *"Lord of the Rings"* and *"Hobbit"* films), *"Mortal Engines"* bears no resemblance to those works except visually. Set in a world in which gigantic, mobile "predator cities" on caterpillar treads roam Europe, swallowing up smaller "stale settlements" to devour them as fuel, the film may have a clever premise, but in ways large and small, it is, like its hedgepodge aesthetic, wholly derivative. The central story about Thaddeus Valentine (Hugo Weaving), a power-hungry megalomaniac who has turned the city of London into a roving, fire-breathing beast of prey, and the rebel who instigates him feels cobbled together from bits and pieces of every fantasy franchise from *"Mad Max"* to *"Pirates of the Caribbean"* to *"Star Wars."*

Yes, the setting is a wasteland of dwindling resources. And yes, there's a staggering undead zombie villain (Stephen Lang, playing a metallic walking corpse with glowing-green eyes named Shrike). There's even a scene in which a plucky rebel (Robert Sheehan) pilots a small fighter plane into the belly of the Death-Star-like behemoth around which the action swarms, exhaustingly.

In addition to Sheehan's Tom, a museum curator who tends to a repository of such "old tech" as iPhones with smashed screens and a pair of Minion statues — referred to as "the American deities," in a cute, if all too rare lark — the main hero is Hester (played by Icelandic actress Hera Hilmar with a large facial scar that only makes her more beautiful). Hester and Tom find themselves on the side of an underground resistance manned by a mini-United Nations of insurgents with such names as Anna Fang (Jihae), Yasmina (Frankie Adams), Sathya (Menik Gooneratne) and Khora (Rege-Jean Page).

You know they're the good guys because they're diverse. London appears to be mostly white.

But I'm overthinking this. *"Mortal Engines"* is no political film. In spirit and ambition, it's closer to a children's serial like the 1950s' *"Flash Gordon"* — complete with swashbuckling comic-book heroes and scenery-chewing villains — than anything made this century.

The most modern thing about *"Mortal Engines"* is its excess. As cor pulmonale and as unwieldy as the film's vision of London is — sluggish, lumbering and clumsy — the movie isn't something you savor so much as swallow whole, without tasting it. If you do decide to buy a ticket, the best advice might be what Valentine says to his engine-room underlings. It's just before London, like a snake, unhinges its huge mechanical jaws and gulps down a small Bavarian mining town — people, bricks and all. "Prepare to ingest."

"Mortal Engines" is rated PG-13 for sequences of futuristic violence and action. Running time: 128 minutes.



A elderly horticulturist and WWII veteran is caught transporting cocaine through Michigan for a Mexican drug cartel in *"The Mule,"* starring Clint Eastwood, right, Taissa Farmiga, center, and Bradley Cooper (not pictured).

WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

'The Mule'

Film struggles to find a rhythm

By MICHAEL PHILLIPS
Chicago Tribune

Mules are stubborn. Producer, director and star Clint Eastwood no doubt relished the double meaning in the title of his latest film, *"The Mule."* The heavily fictionalized drug courier Eastwood plays here wants no part of today's world of snowflakes and sensitivities and multiracial realities. Nor does Eastwood's character want anything to do with post-1975 technology; he complains constantly about cellphones, when he's not calling out Mexicans as "beaners," or African-Americans as "you Negro folks." It worked for "Gran Torino." Who knows, maybe it'll get by here.

"The Mule" is a step up from Eastwood's earlier 2018 release, *"The 15:17 to Paris,"* and there's some satisfaction in watching Eastwood, now 88, trade fours with his co-stars, including Bradley Cooper, here playing a Drug Enforcement Agency agent; Dianne Wiest, as the title character's resentful/adoring ex-wife; and Andy Garcia as a cartel boss who takes a personal interest in the charming, cranky old gringo moving his product.

The inspiration for *"The Mule"* came from Sam Dolnick's 2014 New York Times Magazine feature on Leo Sharp. Sharp was a World War II Bronze Star veteran, a horticulturist and daily "hybridizer" of some renown. When his business stumbled with the rise of online commerce, he tried running drugs for the Sinaloa cartel headed by Joaquin Guzman, better known as El Chapo. Sharp did well: He ran untold millions of dollars of cocaine into Detroit and other cities, making up to \$100,000 a drop. Years went by; no arrests, no suspicion. He was arrested in 2011, served one year of a three-year sentence, and died a free man, at 92, in northwest Indiana.

"The Mule" retells it as if terrified of giving the main character a strong point of view, or viewing him through a stimulating clash of perspectives. The movie's version of Sharp is Earl Stone, a babe in the woods, naive in the comically implausible extreme. The movie ticks off one drug run after another, from Texas

to Chicago. The road trips are excuses to have Eastwood sing along with Dino to "Ain't That a Kick in the Head," or with Roger Miller and "Dang Me."

The script bends over backwards to justify Earl's criminality: First he needs money for his granddaughter's (Taissa Farmiga) wedding, then he's saving the local VFW hall, damaged in a fire, from extinction. He's Robin Hood, alternately glib and defiant. As Earl's overseers grow increasingly impatient with the man they call "Tata," Cooper and Michael Pena's blandly characterized DEA agents draw closer.

It's easy to see why Eastwood was attracted to the story, but with screenwriter Nick Schenk's rote tick-tock of a script, *"The Mule"* struggles to find a rhythm. The implication here is that Earl, threatened with foreclosure, is just another military veteran victimized by the system and desperate for a dignified financial solution to his predicament. So who can blame him for the cartel adventure? Also he learns the importance of family in the nick of time, so: bonus points.

"The Mule" is rather touching when viewed as a Hollywood legend working through some personal issues about how he fared as a husband and father. (His daughter Alison Eastwood plays Earl's estranged and bitter daughter.) But there's a misjudgment in Schenk's script, one from which the film can't fully recover. If Earl is just a patsy, we don't believe the events. If the movie's afraid to suggest even a hint of dementia (in real life, Leo Sharp's lawyers painted him as half-gone and therefore easily manipulated by the cartel), then *"The Mule"* doesn't make human, scene-to-scene sense in any direction.

Long known as a director who shoots his screenplays as written, no questions asked, Eastwood has always been at the mercy of the text. This time, the storytelling — and Eastwood's own milieu, nostalgic longing for an America of, by and for guys who look like Clint Eastwood — turns terrific raw material into what feels like one fib, duck and dodge after another.

"The Mule" is rated R for language throughout and brief sexuality/nudity. Running time: 116 minutes.



'Second Act'

"Second Act" stars Jennifer Lopez, second from right, as Maya, a 40-year-old woman struggling with frustrations of not having achieved more in life. She is passed over for a promotion solely because she doesn't have a college degree but gets the chance to prove that street smarts are as valuable as book smarts. Co-starring Charlyne Yi, from left, Alan Aisenberg and AnnaLeigh Ashford. A review of the comedy was not available at press time. The film is rated PG for some crude sexual references and language. Running time: 105 minutes.

STX Films

WEEKEND: BOOKS

LITERARY DISORDER

Book awards a reminder that critics, readers often don't agree

By RON CHARLES • *The Washington Post*

"Still Me" by British writer Jojo Moyes, is the best novel of 2018.

This is not a widely held critical opinion. In fact, I don't know any critics who have picked "Still Me" as their favorite book of the year, but that's entirely beside the point. More than 5 million votes were cast in the Goodreads Choice Awards, and the people have spoken: "Still Me," the third novel of a romantic trilogy that began with "Me Before You," is the supreme work of fiction published in 2018.

The Goodreads Choice Awards — now in its 10th year — is a massive literary contest, drawing from a membership of 80 million users. (Goodreads is owned by Amazon.com, whose CEO, Jeff Bezos, owns The Washington Post.) It rivals PBS' "The Great American Read," which this fall attracted more than 4 million votes to determine the all-time favorite work of fiction in the U.S. The winner in that contest, you might recall, was Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," but No. 2 — let this sink in

— was Diana Gabaldon's "Outlander" series, a fantasy-romance about a time-traveling World War II nurse in love with an 18th-century Scotsman.

Popularity contests like this are easy for book critics to dismiss, but they serve an important function: They confirm our superiority. As *hoi polloi* gobble up cheesy romances and corny thrillers, guardians of the literary flame rest assured that they're playing the long game, investing in the future of great art.

If we're honest, though, we devotees of obscure literary fiction should confess to deeply rooted anxiety about the standards of literary taste, about the validity of critical judgment and especially about our own relevance. It's why we've been yammering on about the essential contribution of our insights at least since Matthew Arnold published "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" in 1865. Like faithful adherents in some millennialist cult, we wait, assured of our reward in literary heaven. Till then, we scoff at James Patterson's multiple spots on the best-seller list. We roll our eyes at Oprah. We mock the wisdom of crowds.

And, traditionally, the crowds mock us: the effete brainiacs, the absurd eggheads, the mad scientists. "Anti-intellectualism is virtually our civil religion," the critic A.O. Scott once wrote.

There must be a better way.

Yes, professional critics who read widely and with discernment contribute something valuable when they curate the best books of the year. But that needn't necessitate regarding the choices of ordinary readers with disdain. And we'd do well to remember that even the most prestigious literary awards are sometimes given to self-absorbed, desiccated books that quickly evaporate into irrelevancy. Time is ultimately the only critic whose judgment matters.

In 2003, Stephen King won a lifetime achievement award from the National Book Foundation. He was well aware that certain august literary critics — among them, Harold Bloom — thought honoring a popular horror writer was idiotic. In his acceptance speech, King pleaded for a more capacious appreciation for the wide variety of books. "Bridges can be built between the so-called popular fiction and the so-called literary fiction," he said, "... if we keep our minds and hearts open." He went on to call out the elitism of highbrow critics with a particularly devastating question: "What do you think, you get social or academic Brownie points for deliberately staying out of touch with your own culture?"



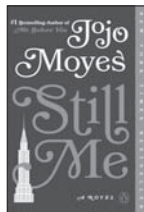
Looking at the list of Goodreads Choice Award winners, it's easy to feel contrary, even snobby. In almost every category that I know anything about, the voters have picked the wrong book. (Naturally, I'm working from the age-old principle that books I have read are always better than books I

have not read.) A Place for Us," by Fatima Farheen Mirza, should have won the fiction prize, right? Surely, "There There," by Tommy Orange, should have been named the best debut. And how could they have chosen King's "Elevation" as the best horror novel of the year when it's not even a horror novel? (One victory for truth and justice: "Circe," Madeline Miller's brilliant reimagining of the witch in Greek mythology, won the prize for this year's best work of fantasy.)

If there's any abiding principle behind online polls, it's that when asked to choose, users will choose, no matter how ludicrous the task. Consider the Best of the Best — a new category for the "ultimate favorite" selected from 170 Goodreads winners in all categories over the past decade. This impossible catchall contest pitted masterpieces like Colson Whitehead's "The Underground

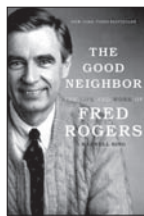
Railroad" against a graphic novel version of Stephen Meyer's "Twilight," along with cookbooks and Instagram poetry. Ultimately, "The Hate U Give," a best-selling debut novel by YA author Angie Thomas, won the prize.

After serving as a judge on several literary contests, from the National Book Critics Circle to the Pulitzer — I've come



to believe that the best measure of the legitimacy of a book prize is the vibrancy of the discussion it inspires. The terms "best," "favorite," "acclaimed" and "popular" are slippery, but they aren't useless. If awards don't tell us anything definitive about the books themselves, they certainly in-

dicade something illuminating about the era. Notice, for instance, that 17 of this year's 21 Goodreads Choice Awards were won by women. (Ian McEwan famously observed, "When women



start reading, the novel will be dead.") The voters seem to skew younger, which is an encouraging sign. And they like propulsive, exciting stories — from Kristin Hannah's "The Great Alone" (historical fiction) to Michelle McNamara's "I'll Be Gone in the Dark" (nonfiction).

Here's a list of all the winners. Disagree, debate, even argue. After all, what else is a literary contest for?

Best of the best: "The Hate U Give," by Angie Thomas

Fiction: "Still Me," by Jojo Moyes

Mystery & thriller: "The Outsider," by Stephen King

Historical fiction: "The Great Alone," by Kristin Hannah

Fantasy: "Circe," by Madeline Miller

Romance: "The Kiss Quotient," by Helen Hoang

Science fiction: "Vengeful," by V.E. Schwab

Horror: "Elevation," by Stephen King

Humor: "The Last Black Unicorn," by Tiffany Haddish

Nonfiction: "I'll Be Gone in the Dark," by Michelle McNamara

Memoir & autobiography: "Educated," by Tara Westover

History & biography: "The Good Neighbor," by Maxwell King

Science: "The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs," by Stephen Brusatte

Food & cookbooks: "Hungry for More," by Chrissy Teigen

Graphic novels & comics: "Herd-ing Cats," by Sarah Andersen

Poetry: "The Witch Doesn't Burn in This One," by Amanda Lovelace

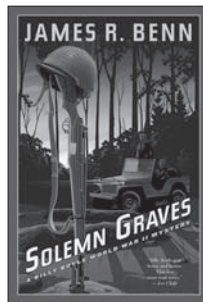
Debut: "Children of Blood and Bone," by Tomi Adeyemi

Young adult fiction: "Leah on the Offbeat," by Becky Albertalli

Young adult fantasy & science fiction: "Kingdom of Ash," by Sarah J. Maas

Middle grade & children's: "The Burning Maze," by Rick Riordan

Picture books: "I Am Enough," by Grace Byers and Keturah A. Bobo



Solemn Graves

James R. Benn

As the years go by and more WWII veterans pass away, historical fiction, such as the enthralling series about U.S. Army investigator Billy Boyle by James R. Benn, takes on a new importance. Benn's meticulously researched WWII novels rise above entertainment to give readers a deep insight into the machinations of war and the people affected by it. Through fiction, Benn allows readers to connect with those times in ways that most textbooks cannot.

As Benn shows time and again, the methods, technology and strategies have changed, but war's emotional cost seldom wavers.

"Solemn Graves," Benn's 13th in this series, continues those high standards. Set a month after D-Day in 1944, Boyle arrives in Normandy to investigate the murder of Maj. David Jerome, the commanding officer of a signals company. The major was found in a villa close to the front lines where he had been housed during a covert assignment. Maj. Jerome's mere presence there was to have been top secret — he was advising the "Ghost Army," troops charged with creating "phantom action" to distract and misinform the Germans.

Boyle's investigation centers on a young woman, too frightened to talk, an amoral Resistance leader, the villa's owner, the area residents, and members of the major's own troops.

Benn invigorates "Solemn Graves" with a complex, somber look at life in the midst of war where betrayals can come from your neighbor, who might be a Nazi spy, and gunfire is constantly in the background. Benn's hallmark of meticulous research shines as he delivers a perspective view of how the residents treat those accused of collaboration horizontally, women who trade sex with German soldiers in exchange for food or other items.

Benn elegantly weaves in military strategy to move along the plot without overwhelming the story. Benn's series has always been about how war affects both soldiers and civilians and how Boyle must make one death matter in the midst of so much carnage.

In a series known for excellence, "Solemn Graves" stands out.

— Oline Cogdill/Sun Sentinel

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

“The Equalizer 2”: Denzel Washington completely commands a screen, whether his character is ushering in the calm before the storm or ends up being the force behind the storm. He gets multiple opportunities to do both in “The Equalizer 2,” the follow-up to the 2014 movie that was based on the ‘80s TV series with Edward Woodward.

Normally, it would be impossible to forgive the writing, but “The Equalizer 2” works because of Washington’s intensity.



Saban Films-Roadside Attractions

Kristen Stewart, left, and Chloe Sevigny star in “Lizzie,” a retelling of the infamous 1892 Borden murders. The film is on DVD.

“Lizzie”: Most of the elements of Lizzie Borden’s life are in this tale of murder and mayhem (with less emphasis on the court proceedings). But the focus is more on the systematic development of relationships that served a purpose in Borden’s life.

Central to what is either emotional manipulation or the first outward expression of love for Lizzie (Chloe Sevigny) comes through her interaction with Bridget Sullivan (Kristen Stewart), the Irish servant who moves into the Borden home.

“Lizzie” is a film based on an oft-told tale that comes across with enough originality to make it interesting.

“Smallfoot”: Director Karey Kirkpatrick offers a twist on the myths and legends about Bigfoot. In the Himalayas, a community of Yeti has been living a hidden existence from the world. Only rumors and legends exist of a creature who has invaded their world known as the smallfoot.

A young Yeti, Migo (voiced by Channing Tatum), risks his life and goes against the rules to search for a smallfoot. What Migo doesn’t realize is that the truth might be more dangerous than legend.

The animation, writing and music are neither good nor bad. “Smallfoot” will leave only a tiny footprint on the film world.

Also available on DVD:

“Peppermint”: A woman (Jennifer Garner) becomes a vigilante after her husband and child are murdered.

“The Real Story: Master and Commander”: Historians and experts who worked behind the scenes of the film discuss their re-creation of the 19th-century seafaring adventure for the big screen.

“Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero”: Young soldier forms a bond with a stray dog who is still recognized as the first dog promoted to the rank of sergeant in the U.S. Army.

“Sacred”: A look at the importance and power of religion, culture and spirituality as experienced by people of various denominations.

“We, The Marines”: Gene Hackman narrates this examination of becoming and serving as a member of the Marine Corps.

“The Mangler”: A cop’s investigation uncovers a town’s darkest secret. Based on the Stephen King short story.

“River Runs Red”: A judge (Dale Diggles), a detective (John Cusack) and a mechanic (George Lopez) work to stop corrupt cops.

“Galveston”: A hit man (Ben Foster) survives a double-cross and begins looking for a new life.

“Instinct: Season One”: A spy-turned-author helps New York police solve crimes. Alan Cumming stars.

—Rick Bentley/Tribune News Service

Extreme close-up

‘Born to Run’ rocker gets personal in Netflix special ‘Springsteen on Broadway’



KEVIN MAZUR/Netflix

By GLENN GAMBOA
Newsday

“Springsteen on Broadway”—the Netflix filmed version of Bruce Springsteen’s wildly successful autobiographical Broadway show—opens with a tight shot of his face. It’s a smart move. Not only does it show that the filmed version, directed by longtime Springsteen collaborator Thom Zimny, plans to offer a different experience than the one lucky Broadway showgoers enjoyed, it also makes clear what the show is about. This isn’t going to be a couple of hours with The Boss, the Rock and Roll Hall of Famer who fills stadiums with fans screaming along with “Born to Run.” This is a rare opportunity to spend time with the man.

“This is what I’ve presented to you all these years as my long and noisy prayer, as my magic trick,” Springsteen says onstage. “And like all good magic tricks, it begins with a setup.”

“Springsteen on Broadway” is all about the “setup,” about how Springsteen became The Boss and what that has meant to him. It’s no wonder fans jumped at the opportunity to see the “setup,” especially in the intimate setting of the 975-seat Walter Kerr Theatre, and were willing to pay up to \$850 (and even more if they went to scalpers) to do it. Springsteen did not disappoint.

Those whose love we wanted but didn’t get, we emulate them,” he reveals in the show. “It is our only way to get it. So when it came time, I chose my father’s voice because there was something sacred in it to me ... All we know about manhood is what we have learned from our fathers. And my father was my hero, and my greatest foe.”

So much of rock and roll is built through artifice, crafting larger-than-life personas through smoke and mirrors. Like his surprising autobiography “Born to Run,” “Springsteen on Broadway” seeks to tear down “The Boss” persona by showing its seams.

“I was born to run — not to stay,” Springsteen says, noting that he lives about 10 minutes away from where he grew up in Freehold, N.J. Later, the

rocking champion of the working man jokes, “I’ve never worked five days a week until right now ... I don’t like it.”

It’s a remarkable bit of honesty that the filmed version magnifies. Though the show’s Broadway run ends on Dec. 15 after grossing nearly \$110 million, the Netflix version, which debuts on Dec. 16, is designed to live on, not just as a way for all those who were unable to catch the show in person, but to tell the story in a slightly different way. There are times when it’s so quiet you can hear Springsteen’s boots on the stage. There are close-ups of Springsteen’s hands on the piano or his face as he tells a story that bring the viewer closer than an audience member could ever manage.

The most stunning example is when a close-up shows tears welling up in Springsteen’s eyes as he talks about an unexpected visit from his father shortly before Springsteen’s wife, Patti Scialfa, gave birth to their first son.

“You’ve been very good to us,” Springsteen says onstage. “And I wasn’t very good to you.”

The camera doesn’t move from Springsteen’s face, as he says, “It was the greatest moment in my life with my dad. And it was all that I needed.”

“Here in the last days before I was to become a father, my own father was visiting me, to warn me of the mistakes that he had made, and to warn me not

to make them with my own children,” Springsteen continues, “to release them from the chain of our sins, my father’s and mine, that they may be free to make their own choices and to live their own lives.”

That moment has far more impact in the filmed version than it did live onstage, partly because Springsteen didn’t always deliver those lines as emotionally and partly because even if he did, few in the theater would have been able to see it.

At the show, there are so many other fascinating points to focus on, from the sweet way Springsteen describes his mother, Adele, or the gorgeous way he harmonizes with Scialfa on “Tougher Than the Rest” and “Brilliant Disguise.” Those moments are still in the Netflix version, as are his lovely tribute to the late Clarence Clemons on “Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out” and the stunning story behind the angry version of “Born in the U.S.A.”

But it’s clear Springsteen has a different plan for the Netflix version.

“DNA is a big part of what the show is about: turning yourself into a free agent, or, as much as you can, into an adult, for lack of a better word,” Springsteen told Esquire. “It’s a coming-of-age story, and I want to show how this — one’s coming of age — has to be earned. It’s not given to anyone. It takes a certain single-minded purpose. It takes self-awareness, a desire to go there. And a willingness to confront all the very fearsome and dangerous elements of your life — your past, your history — that you need to confront to become as much of a free agent as you can. This is what the show is about ... It’s me reciting my ‘Song of Myself.’”

“Springsteen on Broadway” does have that link to poet Walt Whitman. It also pays tribute to so many one-man (and woman) Broadway shows.

But more than anything else, it shows that Springsteen is a free agent, boldly telling his own story as honestly as he can. The Netflix version might not quite compete with the experience of seeing the show in person, but it comes close.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



FIT FOR THE AGES

How to keep running at 50 and beyond

BY AMANDA LOUDIN

Special to The Washington Post

I'm a veteran of 15 marathons and hundreds of other running races, and have been in the sport for more than 20 years. At 53, I'm faced with a reality: I'm not getting any faster. I'm OK with that, and I'd argue I enjoy the sport now more than ever.

Not everyone is in my situation. Some aging runners are injured more often than not. For others, the inevitable slowdown is a bitter pill to swallow. There are also masters (over 40) runners on the other end of the spectrum who still want to work on quick times or other race-related goals, and are doing so successfully. But with each passing decade, they become the outliers rather than the norm.

For those of us who are no longer speed motivated but who cannot imagine a life without running, there is a path. Here's what's worked for me, both physically and mentally:

■ **Embrace strength training under the guidance of a pro.** Physiologically, we all begin to lose muscle mass at a rate of 1 percent per year beginning at age 28. Performance coach Chris Johnson says the imminent loss of muscle mass makes strength training all the more critical for runners in their third, fourth and fifth decades.

"You're dealing with capacity loss in your tissues, along with a loss of function and power output," he says. "That can manifest in injury if you don't address it."

To fight back and stay healthy, Johnson recommends two strength sessions per week with heavy loads. "Aim for five to nine reps of a weight 70 percent to 80 percent of your one-rep max," he says. "You can break this

down into several key moves: slow farmer's carries, dead lifts, squats and step-ups, and you'll cover the bases."

Find a certified trainer, preferably one who has a good understanding of running, and ask them for help getting started. Check back now and again for reassessments and adjustments.

■ **Mix it up.** In my quest to find a solid strength-training program, I discovered a local CrossFit gym. Endurance sports and CrossFit are often considered vinegar and water, but for me, the fresh approach has been fun. I might never complete a box jump or an honest pullup, but the gym's coaches have the know-how to give me modifications. I also get in a pool once or twice per week and take frequent walks with my dog.

Take a look around and see what other physical activities might pique your interest — cycling, hiking, barre class, yoga — and devote some time to trying something new. "We all crave novelty in some way," says Denver-based sports psychologist Justin Ross, "so try a new sport. Try to connect with what it's providing you."

■ **Don't be afraid to take off a day — or more.** Runners are a devoted bunch and are loathe to miss a scheduled run, even if it means pushing through some pain. I've learned over the years that if I have a specific ache beyond normal, overall soreness, skipping a run is the best move.

Catching things early and allowing them a couple of days' rest is often all it takes to nip something in the bud. If you're itching to move, there's usually another activity you can do in the meantime that won't aggravate the irritated area.

While time off running sometimes makes us panic, I know that if it's only for a couple of days, I won't lose any fitness. Well-trained

athletes don't experience any significant deconditioning until after about two weeks. In addition to all that, I have long been in the habit of taking a full day's rest from any activity, each and every week. I appreciate the break physically and mentally.

■ **Drop the schedule, if you're so inclined.** When I was racing and training for marathons, in particular, I was a stickler for a training plan. These often encompassed months of runs at prescribed paces and distances. I was dedicated to these maps to success and rarely deviated.

Now? I'd make a poor client for a coach. I still have a basic mental framework of how my running week will look, but it's a malleable framework, one I tweak as life unfolds. I never look at my paces, and I use a GPS watch only if I'm running a new route and want a rough idea of how far I'm going or when I should turn around. The freedom is luxurious.

"Your spirit can get lost when you're on a schedule," Ross says. "When you give yourself permission to cut loose, you can find joy again."

■ **Change up your running.** When I look back over my past year of running, I realize that the few races I've completed have all been on trails. While I no longer care about my finish times at road races, I do enjoy the new challenge of trail running. Ross says this is right on the mark.

"This is a values shift, and that's healthy," he says. "At some point, we all started in this sport because we enjoyed it, and changing things up is a good way to return to that place."

I dedicate at least one day a week to getting out in the woods. When I see a local trail race that fits into my schedule, I sign up. It keeps me in the game, and the change in ethos from road to trail makes it fresh and fun.

This fall, I convinced two friends to join me at Cunningham Falls State Park in Thurmont, Md., for an 11-mile race.

We got lost, tripped over rocks and came back a muddy, scratched-up mess. I can't think of a better way for a group of 50+ something women to spend a Saturday.

Apple watch monitors falls, tracks heart data

For more than a decade, the latest Apple products have been the annual must-have holiday gift for the tech-savvy. That raises the question: Is the newest Apple Watch on your list — either to give or receive — this year?

At first glance, the watch appears to be an ideal present for Apple's most familiar market: the hip early adopters.

But when Apple introduced its latest model in September — the Series 4, which starts at \$399 — it was clear that it was expanding its target audience. This Apple Watch includes new features designed to detect falls and heart problems. With descriptions like "part guardian, part guru" and "designed to improve your health ... and powerful enough to protect it," Apple signaled its move toward preventive health and a much wider demographic.

"The health-care market is obviously important to Apple," said Andy Hargreaves, an Apple analyst with KeyBanc Capital Markets. The fall prevention and electrocardiogram apps are a "play to sell people more stuff" and bring health-monitoring apps beyond just "fitness people" to baby boomers who want to keep themselves and their parents healthy, he said.

The fall-monitoring app uses sensors in the watchband, which are enabled for people 65 and older or after they input their ages. These sensors track and record the user's movements, and note if the wearer's gait becomes unsteady.

If a fall is detected, the watch sends its wearer a notification. If the wearer doesn't respond within a minute by tapping a button on the watch to deactivate this signal, emergency services will be alerted that the wearer needs help.

That minute also gives the wearer time to prevent false alarms, such as a dropped watch.

Many geriatricians and medical experts agree that this app could help older people.

Falls can cause fractured hips and head injuries, but even fear of falling can prevent older people from participating in activities.

Fall deaths in the U.S. increased 30 percent for older adults in the past decade, and 3 million older people go to the emergency room for fall injuries each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr. Armin Shahrokni, an internist with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, is excited that older patients might get into wearable technology.

"In older cancer patients, all the chemo can make them fall more," he said, making detecting falls and balance important.

The other app, the ECG monitoring app, uses sensors in the wristband to monitor a patient's heartbeat and send alerts if it gets too fast or too slow. Specifically, the app is meant to detect atrial fibrillation, which is a type of arrhythmia, also described as a problem with the speed or rhythm of the heartbeat.

— Rachel Bluth Kaiser Health News

WEEKEND: FAMILY

How to avoid the doghouse

Proceed with caution when giving a pet as a gift

By Lucas Daprile
The State (Columbia, S.C.)

Thinking about surprising a loved one with a dog for Christmas? Be careful. I would know. I've done it.

Before I give you my bullet points of wisdom, let me tell you a little about why I chose to surprise a loved one with a dog for Christmas.

My fiancée and I had just moved in together to a Florida apartment and she would not stop telling me how much she wanted a dog.

"How about this one?" she would say, turning the phone to a litter of German shepherds or yellow labs on Craigslist.

"No way," I would say.

First of all, I have a prejudice against German shepherds. A few years ago, while I was running, a 100-pound police dog wannabe chased me down and bit me square on the butt. Second, I couldn't afford to shell out \$800.

But she really wanted a dog. This is just a phase, I told myself.

It wasn't. She really wanted a dog, and secretly, I kind of did too. I had grown up with fuzzy, awkward golden retrievers (puzz one out for Deano and Zoe), and I loved them.

One day, when my fiancée was showing me a picture of Dallas, a Shiba Inu mix, cuddling and playing with a trainer at the local shelter, I burst out in laughter.

Guys, gals—I probably don't have to tell you this, but don't laugh in your loved one's face when they tell you they want something. It doesn't end well.

I wasn't trying to mess with her. I had been sneaking off to the shelter to look at dogs. When I came across Dallas, the dog lurched at the chain-link fence, teeth chomping like an over-cafeinated bear trap. I jumped back and literally screamed in the middle of the dog shelter.

"Oh, she just doesn't like men," the shelter staff told me.

Good to know.

I moved on to other dogs, playing cross-range fetch with stocky slobber machines and pity-petting geriatric pooches that had weird elbows. I prepared to cut my losses

and took one more lap around the dog kennels. I stopped by what I thought was a puppy, curled up in the corner and one of the few dogs not barking.

"That's Baby Girl," a staff member told me. "I'm not sure why she hasn't been adopted yet. She's so sweet."

Baby Girl was a four-year-old rescue from the streets of Miami. She was shy, but cuddly, comfortable around people, but not other dogs; gentle, but protective. With a chipped tooth, a giraffe neck and bat ears, people tended to walk by the oddly proportioned yet adorable 40-pound pit bull mix. I fell in love with her right away.

A few days later, I adopted her, and surprised my fiancée with a Christmas dog.

Her first reaction: I love it! Second reaction: Let's name her Ella!

Third reaction: We're never gonna get an apartment with a pit (bull) mix.

The next six months: I wanted a say in this.

Today, my fiancée and Ella are inseparable. But the first few months were tough, and I would have done a few things differently if I could go back. Without further ado, here is my advice to people considering whether to get a dog for a loved one for Christmas:

• **Try before you buy**

As I learned with hellhound murder dog Dallas, looks can be deceiving. A dog that looks sweet in a picture or video might be actively plotting to kill you.

• **Let your loved one have a say**

This is tricky, but surprising someone with a dog they didn't choose could feel more like a burden than a gift. You can still surprise him or her; just say you're taking her to see a movie. Then, drive straight to the shelter and tell your loved one you found a dog they might like.

• **Go to the shelter**

Before you accuse me of channeling my inner Sarah McLachlan, choosing a shelter dog is not about fighting off tears every time an ASPCA commercial interrupts your

marathon of "Gossip Girl."

For one, it's cheaper.

Two, someone has already interacted with that dog who doesn't have a financial stake in whether or not you adopt. I have often found the staff at shelters to be forthcoming when talking about a dog's strengths and weaknesses.

• **Communicate, communicate, communicate**

If you do choose to show up at the door with a surprise dog for your loved one, make sure you know exactly what he or she wants. In my case, I knew my fiancée wanted her dog to be medium-size, well-behaved, quiet, gentle and obedient. The only reason Ella worked for us is because I got as close to those criteria as I could. If I had guessed and got her some monster—like, I don't know, Dallas—I guarantee one of us would have moved out already.

• **Make sure you budget for dog accessories**

You can expect to spend \$100-\$200 on a collar, leash, dog bowls, heartworm medicine, food, treats and lots of toys for your dog to shred all over the floor. It's not much of a Christmas gift if your loved one is immediately obliged to spend \$150 of his or her own money.

• **Learn how to train a dog**

If you've never trained a dog before, you're probably doing it wrong. When I first got Ella, she would shake and panic when she saw other dogs. After a few sessions with a trainer, some diligent training and plenty of doggy socializing, Ella no longer panics at the sight of other dogs. Rather, she sprints full-speed at them and gives them a friendly body slam before sniffing their rear ends. Trust me, it's progress.

• **This isn't about you**

The best and worst thing I did when picking out a dog was getting attached before I brought it home. On one hand, I already liked Ella. I didn't need time to warm up to her. But my fiancée did, and it was her gift. So, at first, it caused us some stress. I had made a major life decision for us without consulting her. I'm glad everything worked out, but in retrospect I would probably go with the movie play-action fake.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Pining for a less painful tree ritual

This year, my husband, Francis, and I went to a local farm to pick out our Christmas tree. In 25 years of marriage, there was one year—and only one, so help me God—in which Francis bought a tree without me.

It was 2010, and our street on Patch Army Barracks in Germany was covered with fluffy white snow. Our base neighbors merrily buzzed about, bundling kids for sledding and stocking up on holiday provisions.

Francis and our son, Hayden, were at the Boy Scout troop's annual Christmas tree sales event. While walking our dog, I stopped to check on them.

The scene was sweet: lights twinkled, music played, kids savored candy canes, a fire crackled. Dads wished customers "Happy Holidays" while boys loaded trees onto cars.

Whatever "cockles" are, mine were warmed.

"Wanna see the tree I picked for us?" Francis offered.

As Francis opened the back of our minivan, the smell of fresh pine tickled my nose. "Looks good, Hon," I said without much thought.

On the walk home, I reviewed the afternoon plan: put up tree, make hot cocoa, set up train, cook dinner while kids decorate, gaze joyfully at tree while snuggled with family on couch. Perfect.

An hour later, Hayden and Francis lugged the wrapped tree up the stairs to our fourth-floor apartment and tried to attach the stand to the trunk. Francis is admittedly not handy, making such moments quite tense.

We secured the tree in its stand and began to lift.

"Uh oh," I said when the tree was at ten o'clock.

"What?" Francis barked nervously.

"How tall is this thing?"

"I don't know... but we have high ceilings, right?"

"No, Hon, we have LOW ceilings, remember?" I said, trying to remain calm.

Francis reluctantly retrieved a saw and stood, befuddled, over our tree. I'd seen this look on his face a thousand times—he had no clue what to do.

Quickly measuring the tree and ceiling heights, I declared, "According to my calculations, you need to cut off one foot eight inches, plus four more so the angel will have some headroom." Francis took a step toward the top of the tree, poking out from the netted wrap.

"No! Not from the top!" I blared.

Winning, I held the spiky middle while Francis timidly sliced at the trunk. A few painful minutes later, the bottom of the tree surrendered, and we were able to get the remainder upright in the family room.

"It looks so small now," Hayden observed of the maimed tree before us in a pile of sawdust and needles.

We resolved to disguise the tree with as many lights as possible, but it took another hour to untangle the massive snarl of wires we found in the basement.

"Can we put the ornaments on yet?" our youngest, Lilly, whined for the thousandth time. After working out the knots, I disguised our crooked tree with four strands of mismatched lights, while Francis lay on the floor with the train set, emitting various expletives.

Having found the manual too confusing, Francis randomly stuck pieces of track together and jammed frayed wires into terminals. The train would not budge. I didn't want to reinforce Francis's if-I-screw-this-up-she'll-fix-it-anyway habit, but I couldn't take any more. I read the manual, assembled the track, stripped the wires to expose fresh copper, inserted the wiring into the correct terminals, positioned the wheels, turned on the power.

Away she went like the wind. Exhausted, I ordered Chinese takeout.

"Great job with the train, Dad," said our middle child, Anna, crunching into a spring roll.

"The tree looks awesome too, Dad," Hayden offered.

"Yeah, thanks Dad!" Lilly exclaimed, throwing her arms around Francis' neck.

"You're quite welcome, kids," Francis said with a wink. "That's what dads are for."

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

Picking out a dog is a major life decision, not one to be taken lightly.

Dreamstime



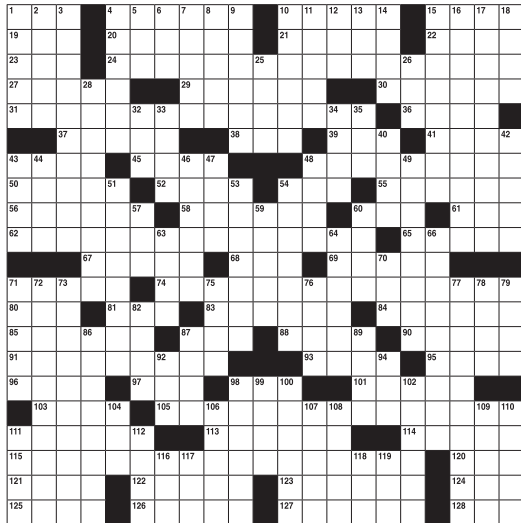
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

WHAT A ZOO!

BY ROSS TRUDEAU / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cranky baby's need
4 "Inspector Gadget" antagonist
10 Eschew
15 Starbuck's order giver
19 Brown ____
20 Best seller subtitled "The Gramophone's Guide to Better English in Plain English"
21 Pomme de (French for "potato")
22 Part (of)
23 Part of U.C.S.F.
24 Cryptid of the 91-Across
27 Cordial relations
29 Gave two big thumbs down
30 Pluck
31 Cryptid of the 115-Across
36 Kids' TV character who speaks in a falsetto
37 Adler in Sherlock Holmes stories
38 Freshly painted
39 Talk like one smitten
41 Singer Del Rey
43 Cabinet selection?
45 When repulsive animals are active
48 Cryptid of 105-Across
50 Jersey and others
- 52 Asian territory in Risk
54 Traitor
55 Surgically remove
56 Inventor Otis
58 "Am not!!" rejoinder
60 Smallish batteries
61 P
62 With 68- and 74-Across, J. K. Rowling's first screenplay, with a hint to three pairs of answers in this puzzle
65 Indulges in to an unhealthy degree, briefly
67 Dispense
68 See 62-Across
69 Of service
71 "____ bleu!"
74 See 62-Across
80 Northeast state sch.
81 Meas. in a T.S.A. carry-on rule
83 Failed the class
84 Perfumery oil
85 Barbie's strawberry blond sister
87 Kingston bro
88 Slagger
90 Real Madrid vis-à-vis F.C. Barcelona
91 Creation after the Indian and Eurasian plates collided
93 Total hunk
95 Tape or patch
96 "Happy Birthday" writer, maybe
97 It's not your fault
98 ____ rap (music subgenre)
- 101 Word before and after "say"
103 Penne ____ vodka
105 It borders Iceland's eastern coast
111 Event not intended to be repeated
113 Bricklayer's tool
114 Weather-controlling "X-Men" character
115 Gaelic's home
120 One with a backstage pass
121 Fast time
122 Sort with a stiff upper lip
123 Capital of Kazakhstan
124 Squeeze (out)
125 "... ____ they say"
126 Cupboard with open shelves at the top
127 What old army buddies might discuss
128 "Far out!"
- DOWN**
- 1 Like Bob Dylan's voice
2 "Remember the ____!"
3 Medical discovery of 1928
4 ____ Johnson a.k.a. The Rock
5 Bungle
6 Corp. mogul
7 Hobbes
8 2007 No. 1 Alicia Keys album
9 Narrow road
10 In a perfect world
11 African grassland
- 12 Cent.: U.S. :: ____: Sweden
13 Return letters?
14 Blue Book value deceiver
15 Also
16 Housewives and househusbands
17 Voice-activated device since 2014
18 Nosta ____
25 Mother of the Virgin Mary
26 Be beholden to
28 Like a top-rated Michelin restaurant
32 Demise
33 Junior in the Football Hall of Fame
34 Real: Ger.
35 Shad delicacy
40 Gumbo ingredient
42 Playwright Chekhov
43 Feudal domain
44 Actress Fisher
46 Ghost
47 Person who's happy to go bust?
48 ____ Ski Valley
49 Repair, as a metal joint
51 Certain product of pyrolysis
53 Classic Chrysler
54 Highway gunk
57 Silent communication, for short
59 The golden rule, e.g.
60 Italian wine town
63 Carries away
64 Nursery-rhyme seat
66 Harm
70 Motor ____
71 It can come in rolls



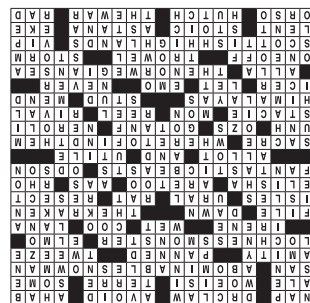
- 72 Like chemotherapy drugs
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GUNSTON STREET



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FACES

Buble's new beat

Musician eager to move past young son's cancer struggle

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

Ga-JENK-jenk-ga-JENK-jenk-ga-JENK. Michael Buble sang, strumming an imaginary guitar with his right hand as his left foot kept time on an imaginary kick drum. "Ba-da-da-BOOM!" Seated — just barely — the throwback crooner was excitedly using his body to demonstrate a vintage Quincy Jones groove he said he couldn't get out of his head while he was recording his new album, "Love."

In the studio, Buble would play the hard-swinging rhythm, from Jones' arrangement of the standard "Please Be Kind," over and over on his laptop, he'd badger his producer, David Foster, to help him match the groove to another tune.

"We must have gone through 40 different songs," Buble recalled, until finally they hit upon the right one: "I Only Have Eyes for You," the dreamy romantic ballad that, sure enough, sounds great atop Jones' jumping beat — tender but sexy, earnest yet witty, timeless but also fresh in a way that ditty hasn't felt in years.

"I was, like, 'Ah!'" he said, describing the result as a long-fought creative victory. Then again, he added, the real win might've been that he was fighting at all.

Two years ago, this Canadian singer — who rose to fame in the early 2000s with his ring-a-ding revival of pop classics such as "Feeling Good" and "Save the Last Dance for Me" — abruptly put his career on hold after his son Noah, then just 3, was diagnosed with liver cancer.

Buble abandoned promotion of a record he'd just released; he called off a planned world tour. The suggestion was that he might be finished with music, unable to focus on anything that didn't directly correspond to his son's wellness.

Now Buble is back. With Noah in remission, the 43-year-old singer says he made "Love" — the album's official title is the shiny red heart emoji — as a means of moving beyond the struggle that turned his life upside down.

"I told myself, if I do another record, it has to be a total love fest," he said.

Yet as much as "Love" represents a way forward, it's also a

return, after 2016's unconvincing "Nobody but Me," to what Buble does best, which is re-imagining durable standards with style and emotion.

Working again with Foster, who'd produced Buble's first several albums before sitting out his last few, the singer gives "When I Fall in Love" a lush romantic throb and presents "La Vie en Rose" as a yearning duet with the brainy jazz star Cecile McLorin Salvant. "My Funny Valentine" gets a cool spy-movie makeover, while "Unforgettable" recovers the grown-up sensuality of a tune that's become a staple of father-daughter dances.

"Love" entered Billboard's album chart last month at No. 2, with Buble's quadruple-platinum Christmas record from 2011 making its annual reappearance on the tally not far behind.

Asked how the experience with Noah shaped the album, Buble said it made him want to create something with some of the same compassion that he and his wife had been shown.

"It's really easy right now to look outside your bubble and think that the world has become this cynical, terrible place," he said. "But we saw a lot of good. And I think both of us felt a responsibility to pay it forward."

He was less eager to discuss the pain that brought on that kindness.

"It's weird, man," Buble said. "I can't want to never talk about it again. At the same time, it's impossible for me not to acknowledge that everything I am — everything I'm doing — is because of it."

"And you hear that in this music. I think you hear clarity."

Noah's sickness triggered a realization, Buble ex-

plained, regarding his reasons for singing.

"Before this all happened, I'd kind of forgotten what it was I loved in the first place," he said. "... Making the music I love with the people I love — that's what's important. Sometimes people don't get that perspective until the very end of their career."

"It didn't happen like that for me."



Michael Buble

LIONEL HAHN, AP/WIDE WORLD

Swift taking Reputation tour to Netflix on Dec. 31

From wire services

Netflix all but ensured Taylor Swift fans will Netflix and chill this New Year's Eve because the streaming giant will debut her massive Reputation Stadium Tour on its service on Dec. 31.

The full-length concert film will bring the sold-out, 60,000-person show — the last on the U.S. leg — to a streaming device near you, Netflix announced Thursday.

The trailer for the film also dropped Thursday and highlights the stage production, which is considered the highest-selling tour in U.S. history and includes fireworks, multiple stages and a 63-foot cobra.

While Swift is sitting pretty on your mobile device, as expected, other networks will be airing their own concerts and specials to celebrate 2019.

Also on Thursday, ABC announced that Christina Aguilera will perform minutes before the ball drops in New York City's Times Square, where the headline will be joined by Bastille, Dan + Shay and the New Kids on the Block during "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve With Ryan Seacrest."

Also part of that production, Ciara will host West Coast festivities in Hollywood, where she'll be joined by Camila Cabello, the Chainsmokers, Halsey, Shawn Mendes, Charlie Puth and Weezer.

'Sorry for Your Loss,' 'Five Points' renewed by Facebook

Facebook announced Thursday that it has renewed four of its shows for second seasons: "Sorry for Your Loss," "Five Points," "Sa-

cred Lies" and "Huda Boss."

"Sorry for Your Loss" is a drama series that stars Elizabeth Olsen as Leigh, a woman whose struggles to cope with the recent loss of her husband leads her to move in with her mother and sister (the latter of whom is played by Kelly Marie Tran).

"Five Points" is a teen drama that tells the story of five high school students experiencing a life-changing event through their different perspectives.

Also a scripted drama series, "Sacred Lies" follows a teenage girl who is missing both of her hands and has escaped a cult. She ends up in juvenile detention and is suspected of knowing who killed her former cult's leader.

"Huda Boss" is a reality series that follows makeup artist and beauty blogger Huda Kattan.

Janet Jackson, Def Leppard to join rock Hall

By DAVID BAUDIER
Associated Press

Janet Jackson joins her brother Michael and the Jackson 5 as members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, earning induction on Thursday along with Stevie Nicks and the top fan vote-getter, Def Leppard.

Radiohead, the Cure, Roxy Music and the Zombies will also be ushered in next spring at the 34th induction ceremony. It will be held March 29 at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Jackson's induction comes after her third time as nominee. Many saw it as overdue, given her prowess as a hitmaker with "All For You," "That's the Way Love Goes," "Nasty," "Together Again" and "What Have You Done For Me Lateley."

Her career has suffered from the fallout after the infamous 2004 Super Bowl appearance where her bare breast was briefly exposed. Jackson became eligible for the rock hall in 2007 and wasn't nominated until 2016.

The Roots' Questlove, in a social media post earlier this year, said her exclusion had been "highly criminal." He cited the influence of her 1986 album "Control," which he said set off the New Jack Swing trend.

"This was no one's kid sister," he wrote.

It will be Nicks' second induction into the rock Hall, since she's already there as a member of Fleetwood Mac. She launched a solo career in 1981 with her duet with Tom Petty, "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around." Other hits followed, including "Edge of Seventeen," "Stand Back" and "I Will Run to You."

Def Leppard earned more than half a million votes from fans, which are incorporated into more than 1,000 ballots from artists, historians, industry professionals and past winners in deciding who gets honored. The British heavy metal band with a pop sheen were huge sellers in the 1980s on the back of songs like "Photograph" and "Pour Some Sugar on Me."

Frontman Joe Elliott said he was initially ambivalent toward the honor until Jon Bon Jovi suggested it would change his life.

"When I look at the list of who's in, it's just obvious you'd want to be in that club, isn't it?" he told Billboard earlier this year. "When you think that every band that means anything in the world, starting from the Beatles and the Stones and any artist that influenced them — your Chuck Berry, your Little Richards, etc., etc. — then of course you want to be in. Why wouldn't you?"

Def Leppard, Nicks and Roxy Music were voted in during their first years as nominees.

Other 2019 nominees who didn't make the cut included LL Cool J, Devo, Rage Against the Machine, M.C.S., John Prime, Todd Rundgren and Kraftwerk.

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OPINION

Ryan had goals. Here's what he accomplished.

By PATRICK MURPHY

CQ-Roll Call

It's hard to excel in a job you never wanted in that second place that seems to be one of the primary takeaways from the three years Paul Ryan served as House speaker since Republicans practically begged him to step into the void they created when he ran John Boehner off from the job in 2015.

Add to Ryan's burden the fact that he had to work with a president who has his opposite in every measure but party affiliation, and it's easy to think Ryan's speakership was doomed from the start. But it wasn't all bad for the gentleman from Janesville. Let's review.

The good: Paul Ryan. If there's one thing Republicans will remember about Paul Ryan, it's that he never made the tumultuous last two years worse than they could have been. While several previous Republican speakers became mired in scandal during or after their tenures, Ryan was never a leader Republicans had to worry about. Not only was Ryan a proven House manager, but his down-to-earth decency and self-restraint were also an important counterbalance to the bottomless scandals down the street in the West Wing.

Anti-poverty agenda. In the months after the 2012 elections, Ryan quickly traveled the country with Bob Wooding, a civil rights activist, to visit impoverished communities around the country. The two traveled once a month for two years to inform the anti-poverty agenda that Ryan hoped to pursue as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

Ryan's focus on poverty didn't get much attention during his speakership, and it certainly wasn't a centerpiece of his or any GOP agenda. But Ryan did manage to move a few discrete items to address income inequality in larger bills. The tax cut package included language creating "opportunity zones" to encourage investment in low-income neighborhoods, along with "social-inflation bonds" to allow bus issues

to address pressing social needs.

Tax reform. As the holy grail of Republican policy goals, it would have been unacceptable for a Republican-led House not to deliver a tax reform package to President Donald Trump, especially after Republicans' failure to repeal "Obamacare" as promised in 2017. Ryan drove passage of the bill, even on the days when West Wing drama threatened to stall it completely.

That the tax cuts also rang up massive deficits and threaten to explode the national debt is a topic for the next section.

The bad: Debt and deficits. If there was more passionate evangelist against the evils of government debt and deficits over the last 20 years than Rep. Paul Ryan, it is hard to think of one. When he unexpectedly ascended to the speakership in 2015, many in Washington assumed he would quickly advance an agenda to achieve what he had preached for so long — a program to shrink the debt into balance, even if it hurt.

But with Trump (the self-proclaimed "king of debt") in the White House, Ryan oversaw a massive escalation of debt-financed defense spending, along with tax cuts that have failed to throw off the increased revenue that supply-siders long promised would materialize if they could pass their ideal legislation. The result has been a nearly 80 percent increase in annual deficits during Ryan's tenure, along with a projected \$1.5 trillion increase in the projected debt over 10 years.

Republicans lost the House. Anyone who covered the 2018 midterm elections knows that it was Donald Trump, not Paul Ryan, on the minds of voters when they were casting their ballots to stop Republicans from power. So blaming Ryan for the loss of the House is like blaming the dog for getting hit by the car. But why was the dog in the street in the first place?

One concern I heard again and again from voters was that if the Republican Congress was unwilling or incapable of providing oversight for Trump and his ad-

ministration, they would pick a new Congress. Had Ryan managed to make the House Intelligence Committee seem less complicit, or encouraged other committees to delve into worrisome conflicts of interest throughout the administration, it's possible the House losses would have been less severe. But we'll never know, since Ryan chose to keep his criticism of the president private, and the House's public posture toward the administration almost entirely supportive.

The truly disappointing: What could have been. When Ryan became speaker, there was an overarching sense of possibility shared by Republicans and Democrats alike that he could become a breakout leader. As a young congressman and Jack Kemp protégé, he was known as an affable, committed policy wonk. He seemed to care genuinely about poverty issues, but was also admired by conservatives for his commitment to Ryan's unsexy work of balancing budgets. What could that combination achieve with real power some day?

The answer has so far been unsatisfying to both sides, even if some of the blame belongs to Trump, whose daily rants and growing scandals quickly and endlessly overshadowed Ryan's agenda. But instead of staying in the fight, Ryan decided to abandon the speakership before most people thought he had really gotten started in it.

The debate among journalists from a wide swath of ideologies is now settling into whether Ryan was a just a failure or more specifically a fraud, in Lawrence O'Donnell's words. Ezra Klein in Vox has lamented Ryan's "legacy of debt and disappointment," while Townhall called Ryan a "stooge" who will "leave in disgrace, deservedly so."

More realistically, Ryan will leave Congress like the institution itself — making incremental progress one day and sliding backward the next, with people on the outside wondering when it will finally live up to the hopes we had for it.

Pundits, predators again all wrong about Trump

By HUGH HEWITT

Special to The Washington Post

Every time conventional Beltway wisdom congeals as quickly as it did on Tuesday — this time around, the certainty that President Donald Trump had blundered terribly in saying he would in effect "own" any government shutdown over border security funding — analysts ought to think back to the stunned silences around many newsmen on Election Day in 2016.

Rarely have so many abjectly incorrect experts shrugged off their face-palms of recent vintage to return to high degrees of certainty in so short a period of time. It's the same class of talking heads that didn't see 2010 coming, or 2014, or who think they can claim there was a "blue wave" even though Republicans increased their Senate majority by two.

Still, this is the business predators have chosen, so they have to predict. A contrarian view is anchored by Arizona Republican Gov. Doug Ducey's galloping victory in his re-election bid last month. Ducey talked about border security almost every day during his romp in "purple" Arizona. Not about illegal immigration, but always about border security and about keeping Americans safe from drugs, cartels and human trafficking.

Because more than 70,000 Americans died from overdoses in 2017, millions of people have at least brushed up against

fentanyl or other opioids, and have often been terribly scarred by it. Some may know most of these killer drugs come via the mail, but they also know it flows like a vast river northward from the Mexican state of Sinaloa, and with it mayhem and death. Border security isn't about the "dreamers" or hard-working undocumented people living for decades in the United States. It's about security. And Trump has declared he is for this security, is willing to engage in budget brinkmanship to obtain it, and is staking the first confrontation in a two-year battle with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., on it.

Shutdowns are tricky things politically. Many claim the Democrats won the 2013 shutdown, though the election of 2014 that followed cost Democrats 13 House seats (they had won back eight in 2012 of the 63 they lost in 2010) and nine Senate seats. (The short-lived shutdown in January was an embarrassment for Democrats, and they found it quickly so it's not often mentioned in shutdown scorecards.)

Now, again, Democrats think they framed the Oval Office confrontation on Tuesday pretty neatly. But Republicans are not so sure. Indeed, some are quietly clapping. "Keep those cameras rolling," they whisper. "Give Nancy and Chuck a 24/7 cable channel." Most Beltway Republican aren't spooling for a shutdown, but out in Trump Country, the idea of fighting

to keep fentanyl out of the country and the cartels at bay — well, Schumer and Pelosi can be against that for the next 23 straight months if they'd like. It's not a winning issue.

The president has major political challenges, but their extent won't be known until special counsel Robert Mueller reports, and until the Democrats settle on a 2019 agenda. The idea that the Senate would vote to remove the president from office over a campaign-finance violation is ridiculous — especially in the absence of evidence of collusion that his foes expected to find. But it's painful for the president to constantly be turned on a political spit on two of three major cable-news channels — channels so addicted to Trump that they barely bothered with Brexit or the Chinese or Iranian elections of 2017.

What we do know is the Beltway is almost 100 percent convinced that Trump can't win this showdown on border security. Just like they were convinced he would lose 25 months ago. Just as elites in Britain were convinced that Brexit would not pass, and then that a "Hard Brexit" was impossible. Just as the croats and Time magazine were convinced French President Emmanuel Macron was the man of the moment. Perhaps the D.C. analysts should reconsider their convictions.

Hugh Hewitt, a Washington Post contributing columnist, hosts a nationally syndicated radio show and is a professor of law at Chapman University's Fowler School of Law.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Barr should return as AG only if he vows Mueller's off-limits

President Donald Trump's announcement that he will nominate William Barr to serve as U.S. attorney general — a position Barr also held under President George H.W. Bush — eases concerns that he would seek to replace ousted Attorney General Jeff Sessions with a loyalist with meager legal credentials. But Barr needs to convince the Senate of something far more important than his undeniable qualifications: his commitment to protect special counsel Robert Mueller from White House interference.

Such an assurance is important first and foremost because of Trump's outrageous attacks on Mueller's investigation into possible collusion between Russia and the 2016 Trump campaign. But it's also necessary because of past statements by Barr that echo some of Trump's jabs at Mueller.

Barr also seemed to defend Trump's call to Chief Justice John Roberts to investigate Hillary Clinton, telling The New York Times last year, "There is nothing inherently wrong about a president calling for an investigation." That falls far short of saying "Lock her up," and Barr did add that "an investigation should not be launched just because a president wants it." But his comment was still troubling.

Finally, Barr suggested that Clinton's limited role as secretary of state in approving a Russian agency's acquisition of a majority stake in a uranium company was worthier of investigation than a possible conspiracy involving Trump campaign associates and Russia.

The Mueller investigation produced new information about contacts between former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen and a Russian who offered the Trump campaign "political synergy." Meanwhile, federal prosecutors in New York have linked Trump more clearly to secret hush-money payments to alleged mistresses. Yet the president, who continues to insist that there was no collusion, tweeted Saturday that it's "Time for the Witch Hunt to END!" Barr must promise unequivocally that if he is confirmed he will allow Mueller and other prosecutors to do their work freely and without political pressure.

Focus soon should change to Google's privacy practices

Google chief executive Sundar Pichai's appearance before Congress Tuesday augured an era of increased scrutiny for technology companies. The hearing was also a swan song for a Republican majority that has chosen to prioritize political posturing over more pressing issues about how powerful firms manage consumer data and how they wield their influence in the world.

Members of the conservative majority on the House Judiciary Committee spent much of their time hammering Pichai with baseless accusations that Google rigs its search results to censor conservative content. Black and white algorithms will inevitably prioritize some content over other content, and to the extent companies can be transparent about how their systems work, they should be. But a single-minded and mindless focus on a nonexistent left-wing conspiracy within Google has had the paradoxical effect of discouraging companies from properly policing their platforms, as



Activists holding signs with Time Magazine's cover rally on Wednesday in Yangon, Myanmar, mark the year anniversary of the arrest of two Reuters journalists.

they hesitate to remove content that should be removed for fear of unfounded criticism. In a visit to The Post after his hearing, Pichai said the moderation of misinformation and domestic extremism on YouTube is an area where Google could improve. He also cautioned, fairly, that such actions must be weighed against the importance of free speech.

The bias obsession has distracted from the more important subjects that Congress has failed to address these past two years. That seems likely to change when Democrats take control of the House in January.

The first subject likely to draw more attention is privacy. Pichai was pressed to lay out, piece by piece, each treasure in the trove of information his company collects on consumers, from name to age to address to minute-by-minute location

— mostly used for targeted advertising. Google has gotten ahead of the impending debate by signaling its support for a federal privacy framework, but it's up to lawmakers to turn vague protection principles into meaningful policy.

Committee members also expressed interest in examining Google's potential anticompetitive behavior. The incoming chairman of the antitrust subcommittee, Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., indicated his interest in "structural antitrust," code for corporate breakups. But the broader appetite for so radical a move is probably limited. Initially, Google seems more likely to face increased attention to charges that it systematically downranks local search results from its competitors.

Finally, legislators lambasted Pichai over Project Dragonfly, Google's exploratory effort to launch a search engine in China. Pichai insisted time and again that Google has "no plans" to re-enter the Chinese market, but he refused to rule out the possibility of a product that would aid in government repression and surveillance.

These questions represent only a start at confronting Google's role in society and how lawmakers might regulate it. Fewer minutes spent harping on bias allegations might have allowed time for further-reaching inquiries. Hopefully, that's what the new year will bring.

Recognize journalists, but also ensure they can do their work

All journalists enjoy getting recognition for their work. But by nature and tradition, they'd much rather tell the story than be the story.

What motivates reporters, from Maryland to Myanmar, is not the desire for fame. It's the hunger to break news, explain the

world and hold the powerful accountable. A savvy reporter, if asked theoretically to choose between writing a Time magazine cover story and appearing on the cover, would surely pick the former. Why would a journalist ever get that spotlight? More likely than not due to some kind of bad news.

Alas, it is so. Time's 2018 Person of the Year, revealed Tuesday, is a small group of intrepid journalists from around the world lauded in a cover story titled "The Guardians and the War on Truth." Six of the guardians are dead. Two are in jail in Myanmar. One faces charges in the Philippines.

Journalists in many countries without guaranteed press freedom must take risks to report news that is critical of the government. In America, where the Constitution provides protections, anger and disdain toward the news media permeate hyperpartisan discourse. President Donald Trump has deemed pesky reporter types to be enemies of the people. Such inflammatory rhetoric, if taken to an extreme here or abroad, is dangerous.

Yet as much as Time's story is focused on tragedy and injustice, it's also a defiant, affirming tale that shows reporters are tenacious souls. Their commitment to news is an occupational trait and occupational hazard. Journalists chase the truth the way first responders chase fires. A few hours after the shooting massacre at Maryland's Capital Gazette last June in which five people were killed, colleague Chase Cook, a reporter, declared in a tweet "I can tell you this: We are putting out a damn paper tomorrow." Journalists in any country would recognize that call to arms. And yes, the Gazette did publish the next morning.

Time gave the staff of the Gazette its Person of the Year honor along with murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Philippine journalist Maria Ressa, who faces tax fraud charges after her aggressive reporting on the government; and Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who were imprisoned in Myanmar after reporting on alleged genocide against the Rohingya Muslims. The inclusion of the Gazette staff is personal to us because it's a sister publication to the Chicago Tribune. The five Gazette employees killed by a gunman who allegedly held a grudge against the newspaper were Gerald Fiesman, Rob Hlaason, Wendell Winters, Rebecca Smith and John McNamara.

Part of Time's purpose in honoring journalists is to highlight the jarring irony of assaults on the truth in the age of information: "This ought to be a time when democracy leaps forward, an informed citizenry being essential to self-government. Instead it's in retreat." Social media can be a great

equalizer between the public and the powerful. Tweets from the streets can galvanize opposition to a dictator overnight. But the dictatorial don't give up without fighting back, and the internet doesn't take sides. Facebook and the like are merely tools available to all, for better and worse, in pursuit of facts or fictions.

What can make a difference, Time submits, is the work of journalists dedicated to fair, diligently reported news and analysis. For journalists to be recognized, and remembered, is an honor. Employees of our parent company, Tribune Publishing, paused Tuesday to reflect again on the loss of our Gazette colleagues.

And then we all went back to work.

A ringing endorsement for national anti-robo-call effort

The Herald-Dispatch of Huntington, W.Va.

How many of us have missed an important phone call because we didn't recognize the number? Nowadays if you don't recognize the number, you don't answer the phone. Why? Because of all those annoying robo-calls.

Some robocalls mask themselves by using a local number when the call really is made from far, far away. You can't even trust the caller ID on your phone anymore.

According to a recent article in The Washington Post, reports of unwanted phone calls are rising. Nearly half of all cellphone calls next year will be spam, according to projections by First Orion, a caller ID firm.

An article in USA Today quoted statistics from YouMail, a company that provides a service to block robocalls. The article said U.S. consumers and businesses received about 30.5 billion robo-calls in 2017. That broke the record of 29.3 billion calls set the previous year. YouMail estimates the 2018 total will jump to roughly 48 billion.

U.S. phones received some 6.1 million robocalls per hour in September 2018 alone, YouMail said.

Help may be on the way. West Virginia Attorney General Eric Morrisey said last week he had joined a bipartisan group of 40 attorneys general to stop or reduce annoying and harmful robocalls. The coalition is reviewing the technology major telecom companies are pursuing to combat illegal robocalls, which can make it appear that the incoming call is coming from a legitimate source, such as a well-known financial institution, business and/or government entity.

Morrissey said the multi-state group he has joined has had in-depth meetings with several major telecom companies. The attorneys general share information about the technological capabilities already in existence or in development to fight these calls.

The coalition is working to develop a detailed understanding of what is technologically feasible to minimize unwanted robocalls and illegal telemarketing, engaging the major telecom companies to encourage them to expedite the best possible solutions for consumers, and considering further recommendations the states should make to the Federal Communications Commission, Morrissey said.

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, who offered the FCC proposal on robocalls, has offered another proposal that he says will help prevent spam text messages. But spam messaging via texting is not nearly as troublesome as robocalls. Paid spam announcements such as much. It says the spam rate for texts is estimated at 2.8 percent, while the spam rate for email is estimated at more than 50 percent.

The sheer volume of robocalls renders cellphone service almost useless at times. It's good to see efforts are underway to bring the anti-robo-calls under control. It's our ability to enjoy our phone service.

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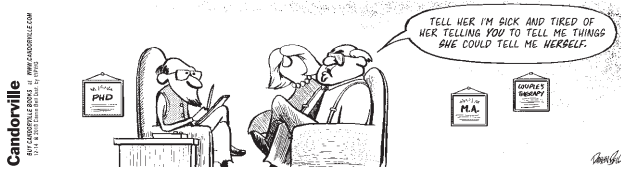
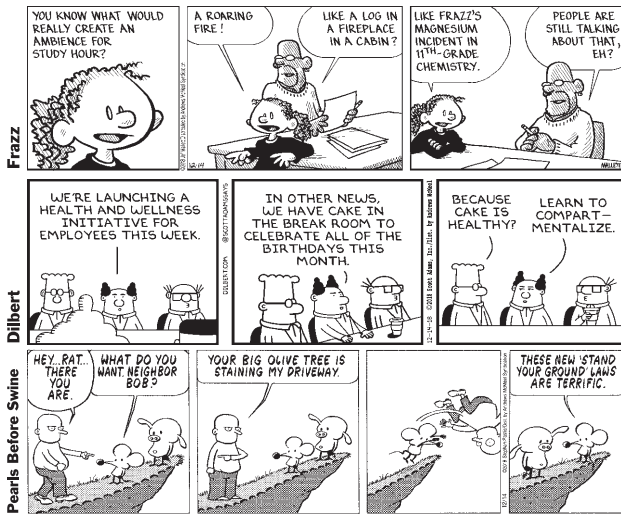
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Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13			14			
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				45				46		
48	49	50	51						52	
53						54			55	
56						57			58	

- ACROSS**
- 1 Abrupt turn
 - 4 Dol. fractions
 - 7 Ill-suited
 - 12 Punk-rock subgenre
 - 13 Ump's call
 - 14 Golfer Watson
 - 15 Drunkard
 - 16 Rush-hour period, to radio stations
 - 18 Capote nickname
 - 19 Goof
 - 20 Slangy OKs
 - 22 Immigrant's subj.
 - 23 Valhalla VIP
 - 27 Bit of butter
 - 29 After-homework period
 - 31 WWII sub
 - 34 Wishful words
 - 35 Period of self-care
 - 37 Service charge
 - 38 Envelope abbr.
 - 39 Tierra — Fuego
 - 41 Hockey venue
 - 45 Miserly Manner
 - 47 Cacophony
 - 48 Period of contemplation
 - 52 Here, to Henri
 - 53 Makeup mogul
 - 54 Lair

- DOWN**
- 1 Piquant
 - 2 Love, Italian-style
 - 3 Arose
 - 4 "The Da Vinci —"
 - 5 Castle tower
 - 6 Mixes up
 - 7 Taxi alternative
 - 8 Fanatic
 - 9 G-man's org.
 - 10 "Big Blue"
 - 11 — kwon do
 - 17 Electric measure
 - 21 Iberian nation
 - 23 Different
 - 24 God, to Galileo
 - 25 Little rascal
 - 26 Born
 - 28 \$ dispenser
 - 30 Compete
 - 31 Ms. Thurman
 - 32 Wager
 - 33 Mel of
 - 34 Cooperstown
 - 36 Redact
 - 37 Fireplace
 - 40 Skip a sound
 - 42 Figure of speech
 - 43 Recess
 - 44 Deli turnover
 - 45 Undo a dele
 - 46 Faxed
 - 48 Proof letters
 - 49 Employ
 - 50 "Give — rest!"
 - 51 Slithery fish

Answer to Previous Puzzle

SPA	SKIT	CATS
EOS	TONY	ALOE
ASTERISK	METE	
EMO	TELECOM	
SHRUBS	SAL	
TOO	EAT	MOCHA
URIS	MAC	TOOL
NADAL	PIG	NSA
	VIM	AUSTEN
YULE	LOG	EAR
ELIS	NEW	SCAST
PERU	ERAT	SHH
SLEEP	TENS	TOY

12-14

CRYPTOQUIP

XCY K GJ DWQMWQT L KV
FQTMKLO MWKM L'HQ EQFCVQ
OQDUX UCHQ-GMTYFJ? GYTQ
K G L'V GVLMMQO WQTQ!
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THE PLACING OF NEW TAXES ON PARTICULAR CLASSES OF EXPORTS? TARIFFYING.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals S

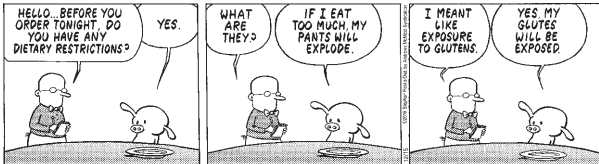
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



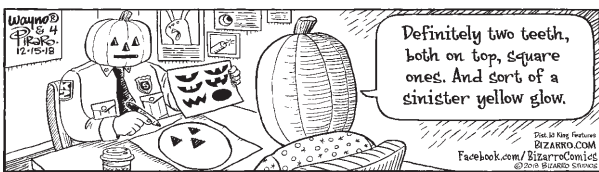
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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			36						37			
38	39	40					41			42	43	44
45					46				47			
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

ACROSS

- 1 Chest muscle
- 4 Sediment
- 8 Nov. honorees
- 12 Citrus drink
- 13 Sloth's home
- 14 Nile bird
- 15 Away from SSW
- 16 Campus mil. group
- 17 Lisa's brother
- 18 Good-looking
- 21 Approves
- 22 Apr. addressee
- 23 "All in the Family" spinoff
- 26 Sea, to Henri
- 27 New Deal agcy.
- 30 Lisa of the Louvre
- 31 "the season ..."
- 32 Rind
- 33 Roman 1051
- 34 Upper limit
- 35 — Rica
- 36 Fish propeller
- 37 Very long time
- 38 "Exactly what I wanted to hear!"
- 45 Melville captain
- 46 Pudding variety
- 47 Pirate's notation
- 48 Theater box
- 49 Exploits
- 50 Sign before Virgo

DOWN

- 51 Thunder god
- 52 Bump into
- 53 Assoc.
- 24 ISP giant
- 25 Numerical prefix
- 26 Blend
- 27 Director Craven
- 28 Favorite
- 29 — carte
- 31 Hissy fit
- 32 Corn recipe
- 34 Karaoke prop. for short
- 35 Most demure
- 36 Thread
- 37 Host
- 38 Beer ingredient
- 39 "Oops!"
- 40 Palm starch
- 41 River to the Seine
- 42 Singer Guthrie
- 43 Contribute one
- 44 Urban haze
- 23 "Tasty!"

Answer to Previous Puzzle

ZAG	CTS	UNFI	T
EMO	OUT	BUBBA	
SOT	DRIVE	TIME	
TRU	ERROR		
YEPS	ESL	ODIN	
	PAT	TVTIME	
UBOAT	ANTI	IHOPE	
METIME	FEH		
ATTN	DEL	RINK	
	SILAS	DIN	
QUIET	TIME	ICI	
ESTEE	DEN	OHS	
DEALT	EST	MEH	

12-15

CRYPTOQUIP

O QKWGR FETOZKE LPZFGB
HVQNOES WH VER LKTOES XK
FOXIFJ XWGVZ KJ EKJLVE.

X I F P ' J F K N Q O X O F Z .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: YOU ASK WHETHER I AM CERTAIN THAT I'VE BECOME NEWLY LOVE-STRUCK? SURE AS I'M SMITTEN HERE!

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals V

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

The unbeaten, and the beaten down

Five D-I teams still looking for first victory while nine are perfect

By NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

Just more than a month after the season started, there are only nine unbeaten teams left in Division I men's college basketball. And it's a similar story at the other end of the spectrum: Only five teams have yet to win a game.

Getting this far without a loss is no small feat. Just ask Gonzaga, which knocked off Duke and Creighton before finally losing to Tennessee last weekend.

Here's a look at each of the remaining teams with a zero in either the win column or loss column:

First, the undefeated nine:

Buffalo**Record:** 9-0

Best start since: 1930-31. Not a misprint. Buffalo went undefeated that season, finishing 15-0.

Highlight so far: CJ Massinburg scored 43 points to lift Buffalo to a 99-94 overtime win at West Virginia on Nov. 9.

Why they're unbeaten: Massinburg leads the way, but the Bulls also have three other players with scoring averages in double figures. They routed Arizona in last season's NCAA Tournament and have picked up where they left off.

Upcoming challenge: Buffalo isn't shying away from tough non-conference matchups. The Bulls play at Syracuse and Marquette next week.

Furman**Record:** 11-0

Best start since: This is the best start in school history.

Highlight so far: Furman won at Villanova on Nov. 17, 76-68 in overtime.

Why they're unbeaten: Jordan Lyons leads the Paladins in scoring at 18.4 points per game. That includes a 54-point outing against Division II North Greenville in November in which he made 15 three-pointers. Matt Rafferty had

15 points and 17 rebounds in the Villanova game.

Upcoming challenge: The Paladins still aren't in the top 100 in the rankings at kenpom.com, so some skepticism is in order. They play at LSU on Dec. 21.

Houston**Record:** 9-0

Best start since: 1969-70. Houston started 9-0 that season, then later had an 11-game winning streak that ended with a loss in the regional semifinals.

Highlight so far: The Cougars beat a nationally ranked Oregon team 65-61 on Dec. 1, the night they opened their new \$60 million arena.

Why they're unbeaten: The Cougars came within a buzzer beater of a Sweet 16 berth last season. Guards Armoni Brooks and Corey Davis are each averaging 16.3 points per game.

Upcoming challenge: The Cougars' conference schedule includes trips to Central Florida (Feb. 7) and Cincinnati (March 10).

Kansas**Record:** 8-0

Best start since: 2010-11. Kansas began that season with 18 straight wins and kept right on rolling until a loss to Virginia Commonwealth in the regional finals.

Highlight so far: The Jayhawks began the season in style, beating Michigan State 92-87 in Indianapolis on Nov. 6.

Why they're unbeaten: The Jayhawks narrowly escaped in overtime against Tennessee and Stanford, but the talent level is obvious. Junior Dedric Lawson is averaging 19.1 points and 10.6 rebounds.

Upcoming challenge: Kansas hosts defending national champion Villanova on Saturday. The Jayhawks also play at Arizona State on Dec. 22.

Michigan**Record:** 10-0

Best start since: 2012-13. The Wolverines started 16-0 and ended up going all the way to the national title game.

Highlight so far: Michigan went on the road and routed Villanova 73-46 on Nov. 14 in a rematch of last season's NCAA championship game.

Why they're unbeaten: The Wolverines were one of the best defensive teams in the country last season, and they might be even better now thanks to the emergence of 7-foot-1 Jon Teske. Freshman Iggy Brazdeikis has helped Michigan withstand Moe Wagner's departure to the NBA.

Upcoming challenge: Michigan resumes Big Ten play in January, but even then the schedule is reasonably forgiving until a visit to Wisconsin on Jan. 19.

Nevada**Record:** 10-0

Best start since: 1951-52, when Nevada started 14-0 playing a schedule that looked a lot different than it does now.

Highlight so far: The Wolf Pack knocked off Arizona State 72-66 on Friday night in Los Angeles. Nevada trailed by 16 in the first half.

Why they're unbeaten: The Wolf Pack have experience with Jordan Caroline and Caleb Martin, and they don't beat themselves. Nevada averages only 9.1 turnovers a game.

Upcoming challenge: This unbeaten run could go on a while. There seems to be a substantial gap between Nevada and the rest of the Mountain West, but a trip to Fresno State on Jan. 12 could provide a test.

St. John's**Record:** 9-0

Best start since: 1990-91. Lou Carnesecca was the coach and Malik Sealy was a captain on a team that also started 9-0.

Highlight so far: None of the victories have been all that eye-catching, but beating Rutgers by 19 on the road Nov. 16 was a strong effort.

Why they're unbeaten: Star guard Shamorie Ponds is the player to watch for the Red Storm. He's averaging 22 points a game and shooting 53 percent from the field.

Upcoming challenge: St. John's starts Big East play at Seton Hall on Dec. 29.

Texas Tech**Record:** 9-0

Best start since: 2009-10. Then coached by Pat Knight, the Red Raiders started 9-0 but ultimately finished 19-16 after losing in the NIT quarterfinals.

Highlight so far: Nebraska has looked pretty impressive lately, but Texas Tech handled the Cornhuskers 70-52 on Nov. 20.

Why they're unbeaten: The Red Raiders are allowing opponents to shoot just 34 percent from the field, and they have a plus-48 turnover differential through eight games. Jarrett Culver is the top scorer.

Upcoming challenge: Texas Tech plays Duke on Dec. 20 in New York.

Virginia**Record:** 9-0

Best start since: 2014-15, when Virginia started 19-0 and lost only twice during the regular season.

Highlight so far: The Cavaliers have played a forgiving schedule, but a 53-46 win over Wisconsin on a neutral floor Nov. 23 was an impressive result.

Why they're unbeaten: The Cavaliers were roundly mocked



RICHARD SHING/AP

Jordan Lyons, left, leads undefeated Furman in scoring with 18.4 points per game.

after losing to 16th-seeded UMBEC in last season's NCAA Tournament, but it's still business as usual for coach Tony Bennett's defensive-minded team. Opponents have managed only 51 points per game.

Upcoming challenge: Virginia opens ACC play against Florida State on Jan. 5, but that game is at home. Trips to Duke and North Carolina loom later.

The last remaining winless teams:

Coppin State**Record:** 0-11

Best game: The Eagles took James Madison to overtime on Nov. 29 before losing 81-71.

Why they're winless: The Eagles have awful offensive numbers in a variety of categories, including points per game (58.1), field goal percentage (36.4) and turnovers per game (16.9).

Possible win: Coppin State begins its MEAC schedule at home against Savannah State on Jan. 5.

La Salle**Record:** 0-10

Best game: The Explorers lost by one to Lafayette in the second game of the season, but the team's most credible outing was probably an 85-78 loss to Villanova Dec. 1.

Why they're winless: The Explorers have allowed at least 75 points in every game, and opponents are shooting 51 percent against them.

Possible win: Next up for La Salle is that Dec. 21 matchup with Alabama A&M.

Monmouth**Record:** 0-11

Best game: Monmouth led in the final minute at Hofstra on Dec. 5 before losing 75-73.

Why they're winless: It's been quite a decline for the Hawks, who just two seasons ago won 27 games. Monmouth is shooting only 25 percent from three-point range. In this day and age, it's hard to accomplish anything with a number like that.

Possible win: Monmouth hosts Saint Peter's on Jan. 5. The Peacocks have only two wins.

Mount St. Mary's**Record:** 0-9

Best game: Only one of the team's defeats has been by single digits, and that was against Lehigh. The best performance for Mount St. Mary's was probably an 85-71 loss to St. John's on Dec. 5. It was a two-point game midway through the second half.

Why they're winless: Opponents are shooting 41 percent from three-point range against the Mountaineers. They have plenty of other problems, too, but that certainly isn't helping.

Possible win: Mount St. Mary's faces Division III Wilson College on Saturday.

Alabama A&M**Record:** 0-9

Best game: Alabama A&M lost 70-66 in overtime at Northwestern State on Nov. 23.

Why they're winless: This start is nothing new for the Bulldogs, who haven't won a nonconference game since the 2015-16 season. The game against Northwestern State was their highest-scoring output this season.

Possible win: Alabama A&M faces another winless team, La Salle, on Dec. 21, but that game is in Atlantic City, N.J. A more likely victory is the home matchup with Jackson State on Jan. 5. The Bulldogs beat Jackson State a season ago.



MATT SLOCUM/AP

La Salle's David Beatty reacts during an 85-78 loss to Villanova on Dec. 1.

NBA



REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP

Chicago Bulls Coach Jim Boylen instructs his players, including Zach LaVine, left, and Lauri Markkanen, during basketball practice at the Mexico City Arena in Mexico City. The Bulls will face the Orlando Magic Thursday in the first of two 2018 regular-season NBA games to be played in the high-altitude Mexican capital.

Going South

Game in Mexico City comes at difficult time for Bulls

By CARLOS RODRIGUEZ
Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — Mexican fans have waited a lifetime for the opportunity to watch their favorite team, the Chicago Bulls, in their homeland. But hardly anyone envisioned that they'd get to see the current version of the team that will face the Orlando Magic on Thursday night amid reports of turmoil in the locker room under new coach Jim Boylen.

Playing South of the Border for the first time in their history, the Bulls (6-22) are the main attraction in a country where the franchise is considered the second-most popular among local fans. Many of them fell in love with the team when Michael Jordan led the Bulls to six championships in the 90s.

But these Bulls arrived in Mexico after losing nine of their last 10 games, and with the worst record in the Eastern Conference and second-worst in the NBA. The terrible start led to the firing of coach Fred Hoiberg, who was replaced by his assistant, Boylen, who is off to a rough start.

After a win over Oklahoma City on Friday and a 56-point loss to Boston on Saturday, Boylen called for a Sunday practice,

‘I think everything got blown out of proportion, but we are in a good state, the team is good and we are all together.’

Zach LaVine

Bulls guard, on the team's recent problems

something that is not allowed by the NBA after back-to-back games. And, according to several reports, players were on the verge of a revolt.

“What I have to do is install this thing and play in the right way to go where I want to go, and outside noise, it's always going to be there, is part of this job and this business. I just take this as a challenge,” said Boylen, who worked for the San Antonio Spurs for a couple of seasons under coach Greg Popovich before arriving in Chicago in 2015.

“In San Antonio, they have standards of behavior and standards of play, and we are establishing those in here, but we can't do that without practicing, and we cannot do that without being pushed. We are in a different place, nothing wrong with that, but we are going to work hard,” Boylen said.

In the middle of the storm, the Bulls packed their bags to travel

to Mexico, where perhaps the change of scenery and the love of the local fans can give them a push toward improvement.

“I think everything got blown out of proportion, but we are in a good state, the team is good and we are all together,” Bulls guard Zach LaVine said. “Always going on the road ... in a different country where we can all be together is good because we can bond. I think it's going to be a good time here.”

Orlando center Nikola Vucevic expects a tough game from the Bulls.

“It's going to be a challenge to play against a team that is in a tough spot, and they surely will try to bounce back and respond against us, but we are going to be prepared,” Vucevic said. “We also have three straight losses, and we want to win as well.”

According to the NBA office in Mexico, the Bulls have about 3

million fans South of the Border, a number surpassed only the Los Angeles Lakers with 3.2 million.

“To me, it is endearing. I have been a Bulls fan since I watched them on TV in the nineties, with Jordan and Pippen and all of that generation,” said 35-year-old Jonathan Flores, who managed to sneak into the arena to watch Wednesday's practice. “This is not the generation that I yearn growing up, but it's still my team and I'm happy to have them here. It's important for the country.”

The NBA is aware of the passion for the sport in Mexico, and maybe that's why they are regular visitors. Thursday's contest was the 27th game in the country, and Saturday's game between Orlando and Utah makes it 28.

Only the United States and Canada have hosted more, and seven of the last 26 games in Mexico have been regular-season contests.

The NFL and Major League Baseball has organized three regular-season series in the country. “You can call it love, passion or solidarity, any of those adjectives describe what the basketball culture in this country is, and that is what the NBA has found here,” said Raul Zarraga, the director of the NBA office in Mexico.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	23	7	.767	—
Philadelphia	19	10	.655	3½
Boston	10	19	.330	4½
Brooklyn	11	18	.379	11½
New York	8	21	.276	14½

Southeast Division

Charlotte	14	13	.519	—
Orlando	12	15	.444	2
Miami	11	16	.407	3
Washington	11	17	.393	3½
Atlanta	6	21	.222	8

Central Division

Milwaukee	18	9	.667	—
Indiana	18	10	.643	½
Detroit	13	14	.500	4½
Cleveland	7	21	.250	11½
Chicago	6	22	.214	12½

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	16	11	.593	—
Dallas	15	11	.577	½
New Orleans	15	15	.500	2½
San Antonio	14	16	.464	3
Houston	12	14	.462	3½

Northwest Division

Denver	18	9	.667	—
Oklahoma City	17	9	.654	½
Portland	15	13	.538	3½
Utah	14	15	.483	5
Minnesota	13	15	.464	5½

Pacific Division

Golden State	18	8	.685	—
L.A. Clippers	17	10	.630	1
L.A. Lakers	17	10	.630	1
Sacramento	15	12	.556	3
Phoenix	4	24	.143	14½

Wednesday's games

Boston 130, Washington 125, OT	
Brooklyn 127, Philadelphia 124	
Charlotte 108, Detroit 107	
Cleveland 113, New York 106	
Indiana 113, Milwaukee 97	
Memphis 92, Portland 83	
New Orleans 118, Oklahoma City 114	
Dallas 114, Atlanta 107	
Utah 111, Miami 84	
Sacramento 141, Minnesota 130	
Toronto 113, Golden State 93	

Thursday's games

L.A. Lakers at Houston	
L.A. Clippers at San Antonio	
Chicago vs. Orlando at Mexico City	
Dallas at Phoenix	

Friday's games

Atlanta at Boston	
New York at Charlotte	
Indiana at Philadelphia	
Milwaukee at Cleveland	
Washington at Brooklyn	
Miami at Memphis	
Oklahoma City at Denver	
Golden State at Sacramento	
Atlanta at Dallas	
Toronto at Portland	

Saturday's games

Utah vs. Orlando at Mexico City	
Boston at Detroit	
L.A. Lakers at Charlotte	
Houston at Memphis	
Chicago at San Antonio	
L.A. Clippers at Oklahoma City	
Minnesota at Phoenix	

Sunday's games

Atlanta at Brooklyn	
Philadelphia at Cleveland	
New York at Indiana	
L.A. Lakers at Washington	
Sacramento at Dallas	
Miami at New Orleans	
Toronto at Denver	

Leaders

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Harden, HOU	25	262	188	749	30.0
Durant, OKC	21	267	158	567	28.0
James, LAL	23	124	80	277	12.0
Antokumpo, MIL	21	219	135	579	27.6
Lillard, POR	24	213	159	625	27.8
Embiid, PHIL	25	218	208	675	27.0
Walden, CIA	23	206	121	610	26.5
Leonard, TOR	19	172	113	496	25.6
Griffin, DET	21	177	116	517	24.6
LeVine, CHI	24	205	120	527	24.5
DeRozan, SAN	24	219	131	575	24.0
Scholar, PHIL	20	147	84	447	22.5
George, OKC	22	178	87	511	23.2
Donovan, BOS	23	186	104	530	23.0
Irving, BOS	22	188	56	499	22.2
Hardaway Jr., NYK	24	170	118	530	22.1
Beal, WAS	24	192	85	525	21.9
Harris, LAC	23	192	67	497	21.6
McCollum, POR	24	201	98	512	21.3

FG Percentage

	G	FG	PCT
Gobert, UTA	148	214	.692
Capela, HOU	183	275	.665
LeVine, CHI	24	205	.854
Sabonis, IND	129	202	.639
Paul, HOU	25	231	.596
McGee, LAL	125	200	.625
Donovan, BOS	23	186	.600
Ayton, PHX	168	280	.600
Allen, BRO	107	179	.598
Adams, OKC	24	201	.596

Rebounds

	G	DEF	TOTL	AVG
Drummond, DET	21	128	205	33.3
Jordan, CHI	23	121	210	31.3
White, MIL	25	96	219	31.2
Embiid, PHIL	25	96	219	31.2
Antokumpo, MIL	24	122	227	31.2

Assists

	G	ST	AVG
Lowry, TOR	24	248	10.3
Holiday, NOR	20	225	9.0
Curry, GSW	24	207	8.6
Wall, WAS	24	202	8.4
Paul, HOU	24	145	6.1
Simmons, PHIL	24	189	7.9
Drummond, DET	23	145	6.3
Fox, SAC	23	172	7.5

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division						
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Tampa Bay	32	24	7	1	49	130 91
Toronto	31	21	9	1	43	113 85
Buffalo	31	18	9	4	40	95 91
Boston	31	17	10	4	38	85 79
Montreal	31	15	11	5	35	97 101
Detroit	32	14	14	4	32	93 107
Ottawa	32	13	15	4	30	106 125
Florida	29	11	12	6	28	96 105
Metropolitan Division						
Washington	32	19	9	9	49	112 92
Columbus	30	16	12	2	34	102 102
N.Y. Islanders	30	14	12	4	32	85 88
Pittsburgh	30	13	11	6	32	101 98
N.Y. Rangers	30	14	13	3	31	88 98
Carolina	29	13	12	4	30	72 81
Philadelphia	29	12	13	4	28	91 107
New Jersey	29	10	13	6	26	88 105

Western Conference

	Central Division					Pts	GF	GA
	GP	W	L	OT				
Nashville	31	20	10	1	41	98	78	
Winnipeg	30	19	9	2	40	107	83	
Colorado	31	17	9	5	39	112	94	
Dallas	31	16	12	3	35	86	84	
Minnesota	30	16	12	2	34	95	88	
St. Louis	29	11	14	4	26	82	97	
Chicago	33	10	18	5	25	93	124	
Pacific Division								
Calgary	32	19	10	2	42	113	90	
Anaheim	32	17	11	5	39	87	97	
San Jose	32	16	11	5	37	102	98	
Vegas	33	18	14	1	37	99	93	
Edmonton	31	17	12	2	36	88	91	
Vancouver	31	14	16	3	31	98	111	
Arizona	29	13	14	2	28	76	80	
Los Angeles	32	10	17	2	24	71	80	

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Tuesday's games

Toronto 4, Carolina 1
Buffalo 4, Los Angeles 3, OT
Vancouver 5, Columbus 2
Boston 4, Arizona 3
Washington 5, Detroit 2
Minnesota 7, Montreal 1
Ottawa 1, Chicago 1
Winnipeg 6, Chicago 3
St. Louis 4, Florida 3
Edmonton 6, Colorado 4

Wednesday's games

Vegas 3, N.Y. Islanders 2
Chicago 6, Pittsburgh 3
Calgary 6, Philadelphia 5, OT
Anaheim 5, Dallas 3

Thursday's games

Arizona at Buffalo
Los Angeles at Columbus
Toronto at Tampa Bay
Carolina at Montreal
Vancouver at Nashville
Edmonton at Winnipeg
Florida at Minnesota
Dallas at San Jose

Friday's games

Boston at Pittsburgh
Arizona at N.Y. Rangers
Ottawa at Detroit
Washington at Carolina
Colorado at St. Louis
Winnipeg at Chicago
Philadelphia at Edmonton

Saturday's games

Calgary at Minnesota
Anaheim at Columbus
Ottawa at Montreal
Detroit vs. N.Y. Islanders at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum
Buffalo at Washington
Los Angeles at Pittsburgh
Toronto at Florida
New Jersey at Nashville
Dallas at Colorado
Philadelphia at Vancouver

Sunday's games

N.Y. Islanders at Vegas
Arizona at Carolina
Calgary at St. Louis
Buffalo at Boston
San Jose at Chicago
Edmonton at Winnipeg
Edmonton at Vancouver

Leaders

Goal scoring

Name, Team	GP	G
Patrick Kane, Washington	30	26
Patrick Kane, Winnipeg	30	21
David Pastrnak, Boston	31	21
Brayden Point, Tampa Bay	31	21
Jeff Skinner, Buffalo	31	21
Nathan MacKinnon, Colorado	31	20
Sean Monahan, Calgary	32	20
Elias Lindholm, Seattle	31	20
Cam Atkinson, Columbus	29	19
Niklas Backstrom, Colorado	30	19
John Tavares, Toronto	32	19
Connor McDavid, Edmonton	30	17
Steven Stamkos, Tampa Bay	31	17
Leon Draisaitl, Edmonton	31	16
Evgeny Kuznetsov, Washington	32	16
Auston Matthews, Toronto	17	16

Plus/Minus

Name, Team	GP	+/-
Gabriel Landeskog, Colorado	31	21
Brayden Point, Tampa Bay	31	21
Ryan McDonagh, Tampa Bay	32	19
Steven Stamkos, Tampa Bay	31	19
T.J. Brodie, Carolina	32	18
Mark Giordano, Calgary	30	18
Jeff Skinner, Buffalo	31	17
John Carlson, Washington	30	17
Brayden Kapanen, Toronto	31	17
Colton Sissons, Nashville	31	17
Elias Lindholm, Seattle	31	17
Nathan MacKinnon, Colorado	31	16
Niklas Backstrom, Washington	30	15
John Tavares, Toronto	32	15
Morgan Rielly, Toronto	31	15
Mark Scheifele, Winnipeg	30	14

Around the league

League learned from Vegas entry

Don't expect Seattle to enjoy same windfall in next expansion draft

BY STEPHEN WHYNO

Associated Press

Hindsight is 43/35 for the Columbus Blue Jackets.

That's how many goals and assists William Karlsson put up for the Vegas Golden Knights after the Blue Jackets let him go in the most recent expansion draft. They also sent first- and second-round draft picks to Vegas to unload David Clarkson's contract and hold on to forward Josh Anderson and goaltender Joakim Korpi.

"I think we've looked at probably 100 times already that, 'Could we have done something different the last time around?'" Columbus general manager Jarmo Kekalainen said. "Probably not. You're going to make some mistakes and you might let the wrong guy go. You do your studying, you do your evaluation of your players and you do your projections and it's not an exact science."

Maybe the second time's the charm.

NHL teams face another expansion draft in 2021, when Seattle enters the league. And the Seattle GM, whoever that turns out to be, probably won't receive the same kind of windfall George McPhee picked up in 2017 to help the Golden Knights make a run all the way to the Stanley Cup Final because some important lessons have been learned.

"We might get to a situation where we're like, 'Boy I don't want to lose any of these guys,' so a team may have to do it again," Dallas Stars GM Jim Nill said. "But we've lived it now and I think we'll have a better understanding of it. And if you're going to (make a trade), you're going to make sure it's for the right person. You're going to be like, 'I'm giving up a lot of assets here. Is this the right thing to do?'"

McPhee held all the leverage that summer, and he stockpiled talent as a result. Because only seven forwards, three defensemen and a goaltender (or seven skaters at any position and a goaltender) could be protected, a lot of deep teams were stuck with core players unprotected and willing to do almost anything to keep them.

Just some of the "fear factor" moves: The Wild traded prospect Alex Tuch and left center Erik Haula go to Vegas to keep Matt Dumba. The Panthers traded Reilly Smith and lost Jonathan Marchessault. The Islanders traded a first-round pick to get rid of Mikhail Grabovski's contract. The Ducks traded Shea Theodore to clear Clayton Stoner's salary and keep Sami Vatanen and Josh Manson. The Penguins even sent a future second-round pick to ensure Vegas would take goalie Marc-Andre Fleury.

Chuck Fletcher, who was Minnesota's GM, figured out the hard way that expansion means every team loses something. Now with Philadelphia, his approach will likely be to lose as little as possible to Seattle.

"No matter what you do you're going to lose a good player," Fletcher said. "You either let them make the choice for you or you try to help them out by making sure you're keeping the things you want to keep. It was a great process to go through and I'm sure there were some lessons learned, but at the end of the day, if you have too many players than you can protect, you've got to pick your poison."

A popular choice last time? Teams giving up players to clear salary-cap space. That was



ALEX GALLARDO, ABOVE, AND JEFF ROBBERSON, BELOW/AP

Above: The Florida Panthers lost center Jonathan Marchessault, right, to Vegas in the last expansion draft, and he wound up with 27 goals and 48 assists in the team's first season. **Below:** Vegas' William Karlsson scored 43 goals after being let go by Columbus.



the impetus for the Fleury move and others, but so much time to prepare could reduce the need for those trades in the summer of 2021.

"That's just one thing that I see could happen, that if the teams aren't financially strapped against the cap then they don't have to make those sacrifices of young players to get the cap relief," Vancouver Canucks GM Jim Benning said.

With two full offseasons until Seattle can plunder 30 NHL teams (Vegas will not participate), a lot of GMs are already planning ahead. Offices in Columbus and Dallas have already been the scene of some long-range preparation while acknowledging a lot can change between now and then. Nill said teams will likely need to decide whether someone is a "core player" or someone who isn't going to be around in the future.

All GMs will need to grapple with the impact of no-movement clauses in player contracts that the NHL decreed must be protected in any expansion draft. Ottawa lost defenseman Marc Methot, in part, because Dion Phaneuf wouldn't waive to no-movement clause. Now that GMs know the rules, deals through 2021 could be affected.

"You're reluctant to give no-move clauses at any time, but certainly with knowing what your expansion protected list is going to be, I think that will make teams a little more cautious," Penguins GM Jim Rutherford said.

According to PuckPedia, there are already 36 players with no-movement clauses for 2021-22. The Penguins, Stars and Blackhawks lead the league with four players each. Don't be surprised if GMs attempt to change some of those situations to put themselves in a better spot.

"You don't want to fill your protection list with guys that you have to protect because of the clauses in their contract," Kekalainen said. "You want to fill it with the guys you want to protect, so you want to leave that option to yourself."

De-improved Penguins

After sitting in last place in the Eastern Conference on Nov. 20, Pittsburgh is 6-2-2 in its past 10 games to surge up the standings. Backup goaltender Casey DeSmith, who has stepped up for injured starter Matt Murray, is a big part of that with his 2.10 goals-against average and .927 save percentage over that time.

"I'm not surprised," Rutherford said. "Casey took the long road to the National Hockey League. He worked at it. He's worked very close with Mike Buckley, our goalie coach, and he's a goalie that really worked on his fundamentals."

The Penguins activated Murray off injured reserve Wednesday. Even with Murray's return, don't expect Pittsburgh to keep DeSmith on the bench for long.

"You have to have two goalies because if you want to have a long run in the spring, you can't wear your No. 1 goalie out," Rutherford said.

AP Sports Writer Tim Bloat contributed from Vancouver.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



STEVE CONNER/AP

Fresno State running back Ronnie Rivers celebrates a touchdown against Boise State in the Mountain West championship.

Get into the spirit with these bowls

BY MATT MURSCHEL
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

'Tis the season for college football bowl games. Check out the top five games to keep an eye on before the Christmas holiday.

Las Vegas Bowl

The buzz: During two seasons under head coach Jeff Tedford, Fresno State has combined to win 22 games as well as a Mountain West Conference title. A win on Saturday would give the Bulldogs their first 12-win season. However, to do so, they must beat an Arizona State program for the first time in four tries. The Sun Devils, who are coming off a respectable season under first-year coach Herm Edwards, are looking for their first bowl win since 2014. These two teams take very good care of the football, with both leading their respective conferences in turnover margin: Fresno State (+13) and Arizona State (+9).

Boca Raton Bowl

Northern Illinois (8-5, 6-2 MAC) vs. UAB (10-3, 7-1 C-USA)
(1 a.m. Wednesday, CET; 9 a.m. JKT, AFN-Sports)

The buzz: Three years ago, the UAB football program was packed away in mothballs with no future in sight. To go from nonexistent to Conference USA champions is nothing short of miraculous, and the Blazers can cap it with its first bowl win against Northern Illinois. The Huskies, who upset Buffalo to claim their first MAC championship since 2014, are looking to snap a five-game bowl losing streak dating to 2011. NIU features a pair of defensive linemen in Sutton Smith (15) and Josh Corcoran (10) who combined have 25 sacks.

Armed Forces Bowl

Houston (8-4, 5-3 AAC) vs. Army (10-2)
Dec. 22, 9:30 p.m., CET; 5:30 a.m. Dec. 23, JKT, AFN-Sports2

The buzz: Army is back in the Armed Forces Bowl for the second straight year after putting together another 11-win season.

The Black Knights, who knocked off San Diego State in last year's game, are looking for their first 11-win season if they can knock off Houston. The Cougars come into this one on a bit of a down note, having lost three out of their last four games. They'll be without their best offensive (D'Eriq King) and defensive (Ed Oliver) players for this game, which is bad news when facing the second-best rushing team in the nation.

Dollar General Bowl

Troy (9-3, 7-1 Sun Belt) vs. Buffalo (10-3, 7-1 MAC)
Dec. 23, 1 a.m. CET; 8 a.m. JKT, AFN-Sports2

The buzz: Troy is looking to make it three straight double-digit win seasons with a win over Buffalo. A loss to Appalachian State in the regular-season finale cost the Trojans a spot in the Sun Belt Conference title game. The Bulls, who have put together their best season in school history, also are coming off a disappointing finish after surrendering a 20-point lead and eventually the game to Northern Illinois in the Mid-American Conference title game. A win by Buffalo would give the school its first bowl win.

Hawaii Bowl

Louisiana Tech (7-5, 5-3 C-USA) vs. Hawaii (8-5, 5-3 MWVC)
Dec. 23 4:30 a.m. CET;
12:30 p.m. JKT, AFN-Sports2

The buzz: Hawaii is back home in the Hawaii Bowl for the second time in the past three seasons after the Rainbow Warriors won eight games for the first time since 2010. Junior wide receiver John Ursua was named a semifinalist for the Biletniok Award after finishing second in the Mountain West Conference in receiving yards (1,343) and first in receiving touchdowns (16). Louisiana Tech is back in a bowl game for the fifth straight year with the Bulldogs looking to make it five straight wins. These two programs were conference foes as members of the Western Athletic Conference from 2000-2011, with Hawaii leading the series 8-2, including a 5-0 mark at Aloha Stadium.

Saturday's bowl games



Camellia Bowl

Georgia Southern (9-3, Sun Belt) vs. Eastern Michigan (7-5, MAC)
11:30 p.m. Saturday, CET;

7:30 a.m. Sunday, JKT, AFN-Sports
Top players: Georgia Southern: CB Monquavion Brinson, All-Sun Belt, 67 tackles, INT, 10 pass breakups. **Eastern Michigan:** DL Max Crooks, All-MAC, 62 tackles, 18½ tackles for loss, 7½ sacks, four forced fumbles.

Notable: Georgia Southern: Rebounded from two straight losses with back-to-back lopsided wins to end the regular season. **Eastern Michigan:** Fourth nationally in red zone defense and fifth in pass defense.

Last time: First meeting.
Bowl history: Georgia Southern: Second bowl appearance for fledgling FBS team. Beat Bowling Green in 2015 GoDaddy Bowl. **Eastern Michigan:** Second bowl trip in three seasons and fourth overall. Team is 1-1 in bowl games since joining the MAC in 1976.



Cure Bowl

Tulane (6-6, AAC)

Top players: Tulane: WR Darnell Mooney, 987 yards receiving, eight touchdowns. **Louisiana:** RB Trey Ragas, 1,141 yards rushing, eight touchdowns

Notable: Tulane: The Green Wave became bowl eligible for the first time since 2013 after a successful two-point conversion with 1:27 left helped them beat Navy 29-28 in the regular-season finals. **Louisiana:** The Ragin' Cajuns had their three-game winning streak snapped with a 30-19 loss to Appalachian State in Saturday's Sun Belt title game.

Last time: Tulane 41, Louisiana 39 (4 OTs). (Sept. 24, 2016)
Bowl history: Tulane: 11th bowl appearance, first appearance in the Cure Bowl. **Louisiana:** Sixth bowl appearance, first in the Cure Bowl.



A.J. SISCO, THE ADVOCATE/AP

Tulane quarterback Justin McMillin will try to lead the Green Wave past Louisiana in the Cure Bowl on Saturday.



Celebration Bowl

Alcorn State (9-3, 6-1 SWAC) vs. N. Carolina A&T (9-2, 6-1 MEAC)
6 p.m. Saturday, CET; 2 a.m. Sunday, JKT, AFN-Sports2

Top players: Alcorn State: QB Noah Johnson has thrown for 2,079 yards and 15 touchdowns while also running for 960 yards and nine touchdowns. **North Carolina A&T:** The Aggies are led by veteran QB Lamar Raynard and a running game that's averaging close to 200 yards on the ground per game.

Notable: Alcorn State: The Braves are back in the Celebration Bowl for the first time since the inaugural game in 2015. Alcorn State is led by coach Fred McNaair, the older brother of the late Steve McNaair, who was a star quarterback for Alcorn State and in the NFL with the Tennessee Titans. **North Carolina A&T:** The Aggies are back in the Celebration Bowl for the third time in four seasons. North Carolina A&T beat Grambling 21-14 last year to give the MEAC a 2-1 edge in the game over the SWAC.

Last time: North Carolina A&T 41, Alcorn State 34. (Dec. 19, 2015)

Bowl history: Alcorn State: The Braves are in the Celebration Bowl for the second time. **North Carolina A&T:** The Aggies are in the Celebration Bowl for the third time.



Las Vegas Bowl

Arizona State (7-5, Pac-12) vs. Fresno St. (11-2, Mountain West)
9:30 p.m. Saturday, CET;
5:30 a.m. Sunday, JKT, AFN-Sports2

Top players: Arizona State: RB Eno Benjamin, 1,624 yards rushing, 15 touchdowns. **Fresno State:** QB Marcus McMaryion, 3,453 yards passing, 25 touchdowns.

Notable: Arizona State: The Sun Devils went 7-5 under first-year coach Herm Edwards. Arizona State won four of its last five games, including a wild 41-40 victory over rival Arizona. **Fresno State:** The Bulldogs knocked off Boise State in overtime, 19-16, to claim the Mountain West title on Saturday. Coach Jeff Tedford has led a program that won just once in 2016 to back-to-back 10-win seasons.

Last time: Arizona State 26, Fresno State 7 (Nov. 20, 1941).

Bowl history: Arizona State: 30 bowls, second appearance in Las Vegas Bowl. **Fresno State:** 23 bowls, third appearance in Las Vegas Bowl.



New Mexico Bowl

North Texas (9-3, C-USA) vs. Utah State (10-2, Mountain West)
8 p.m. Saturday, CET;

4 a.m. Sunday, JKT, AFN-Sports
Top players: North Texas: QB Mason Fine, 3,734 yards passing, 27 touchdowns. **Utah State:** QB Jordan Love, 3,208 yards passing, 28 touchdowns.

Notable: North Texas: The Mean Green went 5-3 in Conference USA and finished second to UAB in the West. North Texas went bowling in 2016 and 2017, losing each time. **Utah State:** The Aggies lost their opener at Michigan State and their final regular season game at Boise State 33-24. But in between, Utah State rattled off 10 consecutive wins — a stretch good enough to convince Texas Tech to hire their coach, Matt Wells.

Last time: North Texas 31, Utah State 23 (October 9, 2004).

Bowl history: North Texas: Nine bowls, first appearance in New Mexico Bowl. **Utah State:** Eleven bowls, second appearance in New Mexico Bowl.



New Orleans Bowl

Middle Tennessee (8-5, C-USA) vs. Appalachian State (10-2, Sun Belt)

3 a.m. Sunday, CET; 11 a.m. Sunday JKT, AFN-Sports
Top players: Middle Tennessee: Veteran quarterback Brent Stockstill has thrown for 3,214 yards, 28 touchdowns and eight interceptions. **Appalachian State:** Running back Darrynton Evans has 1,079 yards rushing and seven touchdowns. He's averaging 6.5 yards per carry.

Notable: Middle Tennessee: The Blue Raiders lost 27-25 to UAB in the Conference USA championship game on Saturday. Middle Tennessee played three games against SEC foes this year in a difficult nonconference schedule, losing to Vanderbilt, Georgia and Kentucky.

Appalachian State: The Mountaineers have won five straight games, including a 30-19 win over Louisiana-Lafayette on Saturday. Appalachian State nearly knocked off Penn State in the season opener before losing 45-38 in overtime.

Last time: Appalachian State 18, Middle Tennessee 7. (Sept. 14, 1974.)

Bowl history: Middle Tennessee: Second appearance in New Orleans Bowl, 10th bowl appearance overall. **Appalachian State:** First appearance in New Orleans Bowl, fourth bowl appearance overall.

— Associated Press

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Jackets want to win last one for Johnson

By CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Georgia Tech players say they'll have extra motivation to send coach Paul Johnson out with a win when they play Minnesota in the Quick Lane Bowl.

The 61-year-old Johnson announced on Nov. 28 he is stepping down after 11 seasons with the Yellow Jackets. Geoff Collins was hired from Temple as Georgia Tech's new coach on Friday, but Johnson will coach the bowl game.

"Going out with your coach, that's pretty cool, you know?" senior wide receiver Brad Stewart said Tuesday. "That's not something people can say every day. ... It's unique to kind of go out with coach Johnson and be by his side."

Returning players will want to make a good first impression on Collins. But even they say their priority is a successful farewell for Johnson in the Dec. 26 game in Detroit.

"We've had the honor to play for coach Johnson, for me the past four years," said running back Nathan Cottrell, a fourth-year junior. "He's been an awesome coach. When you hear someone is retiring, especially in this game, you want to send them out on the right note. We get a chance to do that in Detroit. Hopefully we'll send him out with a win. It does put a lot more motivation in our heads, I think."

Johnson is 82-59 at Georgia Tech, including 7-5 this season. He said he needs a break but left open the possibility he could return to coaching.

The Yellow Jackets began bowl practice on Saturday.

Johnson has tried to keep players on their normal routine.

"It's only weird if you make it weird," he said Saturday. "To me, it's just like getting ready for any

other game. You're just getting ready to play a game."

On Tuesday, Johnson had a quick joke — aimed at his critics when asked if he found it unusual to be freed of the normal recruiting duties leading up to the early signing period this month. "Shoot, I didn't recruit for 11 years," Johnson said, smiling. "That was the party line, right? I don't know how we ever won any games."

Johnson relied heavily on such under-the-radar recruits as Stewart to play in his spread-option offense. That made those three-star players especially loyal to the coach.

"I love that man," Stewart said. "He's done so much for me and my family. I was under-recruited and no one really wanted me and he's one of the Division I schools that believed in me. We had a long talk. I'm happy for him and hope the best for him in future endeavors."

Collins will install a pro-style offense that will bring new challenges for players accustomed to Johnson's triple-option scheme. Cottrell said there's no need to worry about that transition before spring practice.

"The focus right now is getting through this season and then we'll worry about what's to come in the future and what's to come in the spring," Cottrell said. "Right now the main focus for all of us is just to send coach Johnson out on the right note and then whatever happens in the spring will happen. We're looking forward to it."

At his first Georgia Tech news conference, Collins referred to Johnson as an "amazing" coach and said "I get to be a spectator and watch him coach the next couple of weeks."

Johnson said Collins has an open invitation to visit practice.

"I haven't seen him," Johnson said. "He's more than welcome. I think he's out recruiting."



JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

Paul Johnson is 82-59 in 11 seasons at Georgia Tech, including 7-5 this season. He will be stepping down after the Quick Lane Bowl in Detroit on Dec. 26. The Yellow Jackets will face Minnesota.



RICHARD SHIRO/AP

Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence, left, and tailback Travis Etienne lead the way for Clemson's high-octane offense. The Tigers will face Notre Dame in the CFP semifinals on Dec. 29.

QB Lawrence, RB Etienne anchor Clemson's offense

By PETE IACOBELLI
Associated Press

Trevor Lawrence and Travis Etienne are young, a bit raw and awfully talented.

Together, they anchor Clemson's high-octane offense and have helped the No. 2 Tigers get into the College Football Playoff. Now, Lawrence, a freshman quarterback, and Etienne are hunting a national title.

"We've had goals set out for the season, obviously, to win championships," Lawrence said. "We want more than just the ACC championship."

The duo — Etienne, a tailback, is the ACC player of the year and Lawrence was named ACC rookie of the year — have complemented each other during Clemson's 13-0 season. Several times the Tigers have leaned on one or the other to provide a spark.

In a September game against Syracuse, Lawrence was ineffective and had to leave the contest with an injury in the second quarter as the Orange built a double-digit lead. It was Etienne who rallied Clemson with 203 yards and three touchdowns in a 27-23 victory.

When Etienne struggled to find running room at Boston College in November with just 78 yards, Lawrence threw for one score and ran for another to power the Tigers to a 27-7 victory.

Then in the ACC title game, Etienne set the tone en route to being named MVP when he went 75 yards on Clemson's first play in a 42-10 victory over Pitt for the Tigers' fourth consecutive league championship. Etienne finished with 156 yards rushing as Lawrence, despite a pair of touchdown throws to Tee Higgins, was off target much of the game.

Their teammates understand they'll need the best of both to win another national title.

Higgins had talked with Etienne several times about starting fast before the game against the

Panthers.

"I told him, 'First play, take it to the crib.' That's exactly what he did," Higgins said.

It hasn't been a smooth journey for either Lawrence or Etienne.

Lawrence arrived at Clemson amid tremendous hype, the top quarterback prospect who had surpassed the Georgia state high school marks of ex-Tiger national championship passer Deshaun Watson. Four quarterbacks, including last year's starter who opened the first four games this season in Kelly Bryant, transferred when it became clear they would lose playing time to Lawrence.

For the freshman, it was difficult seeing teammates, friends and mentors go and knowing he couldn't let down the Tigers after they placed immense trust in his abilities.

"There were plenty of bumps," Lawrence said. "I'm just going to keep working hard and doing what I'm asked."

Etienne was one of Clemson's final recruiting gets in 2017, a gangly, happy-go-lucky — sometimes aloof — youngster who had plenty to learn about the college game.

Clemson running backs coach Tony Elliott, also co-offensive coordinator, has been at times frustrated, overjoyed and skeptical at Etienne's progress.

"It's taken a long time for him to get here," Elliott said.

A year ago, Etienne relied too much on his breakaway ability instead of patiently finding holes to extend runs, Elliott said. Etienne's vision and ability to read the line of scrimmage has vastly improved, his position coach said, leading to 1,463 yards and a Clemson single-season record 21 rushing touchdowns.

The Tigers (CFP No. 2) will face third-ranked Notre Dame (12-0, CFP No. 3) in the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 29 for the right to play for the national title. Notre Dame coach Brian Kelly is aware much of his game plan involves slowing Lawrence and Etienne.

'I told him, "First play, take it to the crib." That's exactly what he did.'

Tee Higgins
Clemson WR,
on running back
Travis Etienne's
75-yard TD run
on the Tigers' first play of the ACC title game against Pittsburgh

NFL

Bears look to build off Howard's big game

Improvement in run game would be key

By ANDREW SELIGMAN
Associated Press

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Jordan Howard picked the perfect time to break through for the Chicago Bears.

The running back was at his best on a night when quarterback Mitchell Trubisky struggled, running for a season-high 101 yards to help the NFC North leaders beat the NFC West champion Los Angeles Rams 15-6 last week.

Yes, the defense dominated, stopping Jared Goff and a high-powered offense.

But the Bears also got their ground game going. And that was no small development for a team that's had its ups and downs running the ball.

With three games left in the regular season and the playoffs approaching, the Bears would welcome more of that.

"That was nice to get that night the other day," coach Matt Nagy said Wednesday. "We need to build off that. I feel like it was one step forward. Now we got to make sure we ... continue with that next step going forward."

The Bears (9-4) could take a huge step this week by clinching the NFC North championship and their first playoff appearance since the 2010 team won the division. Even sweeter for them, they have a chance to do it against rival Green Bay when they host the Packers on Sunday.



Chicago Bears running back Jordan Howard, center, escapes the grasp of Rams defensive end Michael Brockers during Sunday's game. Howard ran for a season-high 101 yards in a 15-6 win.

Nam Y. Huh/AP

Chicago would clinch the North with a win or a loss by Minnesota to Miami. Ties by both the Bears and Vikings would also do it.

The Bears could also secure a playoff spot this week even if they don't win the division. A tie gets them in, as does a loss or tie by Washington against Jacksonville.

Considering Chicago came into this season with four straight last-place finishes, this is quite

a change. In their first season under Nagy, the Bears are already assured a winning record for the first time since 2012. They're doing it with a dominant defense and a creative offense, overcoming some inconsistent play at quarterback as well as in the run game.

But against Los Angeles, Howard had all the right moves.

"It feels very encouraging be-

cause we knew what type of team they were," he said. "They've been No. 1 all year and they have some very good players on defense, with Aaron Donald and (Ndumukong) Suh and a lot of other players. So it feels very encouraging."

Chicago ranks 13th in yards rushing per game (121.5) and is tied for 18th in yards per attempt (4.2). Whether it's been the play-

calling, scheme or simply poor execution, the run game really hadn't clicked.

Though he's the team's leading rusher with 713 yards, Howard has been in more of a secondary role at times behind Tarik Cohen. But with Trubisky throwing a season-high three interceptions and posting his lowest rating (33.3) of the year in his return from a shoulder injury, the Bears needed to run.

The offensive line held its ground against Donald and Suh and Howard hit his holes. None of his 19 attempts was for a loss, and he wound up with his first 100-yard game in 364 days. He ran for 147 at Cincinnati on Dec. 10, 2017.

"We got into a good rhythm," Howard said. "We did some good run schemes and stuff."

If Howard is frustrated with his role, well, Nagy understands. But more important to him is how his running back has handled it. And to that end, the coach is pleased.

"I'm OK with guys being frustrated throughout the year, because that means they care," Nagy said. "But you handle it the right way and that's what he's done from the very start. And I appreciate that. You tell him ... two things — we're going to get this thing figured out, and on top of that, it's just going to happen where it's going to be your time."

Last week, it was Howard's time. And he took advantage.

"I feel like winning makes a lot of things easier," Howard said. "So it's really easy to deal with. So I didn't really think about it too much."

Carr rolls, despite Raiders' roster, front-office changes

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — Derek Carr has seen two coaches get fired, fellow stars get traded and the roster get overhauled numerous times in five seasons as the Oakland Raiders quarterback.

The latest change for Carr came this week when the Raiders fired general manager Reggie McKenzie, the man who drafted him in 2014 and negotiated the \$125 million contract that made Carr the face of the franchise.

"There has been a lot of turnover," Carr said Wednesday. "Not only in the last five years, but in the last 12 months. There has been a lot of turnover. A lot of different things; systems, players, obviously the GM, coaches. It just teaches you that you can't control anything outside of what you can control. The best thing that you can do is show up every day and give it everything that you have because anything outside of that is out of your control."

"There has been a lot of turnover. Not only in the last five years, but in the last 12 months."

Derek Carr
Oakland Raiders quarterback

In a span of less than a year, Carr has watched the departures of coach Jack Del Rio, coordinator Todd Downing, 2014 draft mate Khalil Mack and No. 1 receiver Amari Cooper.

Amid that turnover and more losing than he'd care to endure, Carr somehow is playing some of the best football of his career in recent weeks, topping a 120 rating in consecutive games for just the second time in his career.

"I feel more confident in our system," Carr said. "I feel like my reads are quicker. I feel like I can get through things and eliminate things faster. That feels better. So, that is a different feeling. But, I didn't feel like when you play

basketball you can shoot it however you want and they're going in no matter what. I didn't have a feeling like that."

Carr has taken time to find his groove in coach Jon Gruden's offense. He began the year overly aggressive, throwing eight interceptions in the first five games, including two on first-down plays in the red zone.

He then got overly cautious, failing to complete a single pass that traveled more than 10 yards downfield twice in a span of three games.

But he finally has struck the proper balance in recent weeks. He has gone a franchise-record eight straight games without an



Ben Margot/AP

Oakland Raiders quarterback Derek Carr, right, has gone eight consecutive games without an interception.

interception and has regained his deep touch. Carr has completed nine passes that traveled at least 15 yards downfield the past two games — against Kansas City and Pittsburgh, equaling his total from his previous six games combined.

His passer rating is 16 points higher in seven games without Cooper than it was in six games before his top receiver was traded to Dallas.

"He can make all the throws,"

Gruden said. "I mean, he can make passes that very few guys on the planet can make, and he can make them confidently. He doesn't even think about it. When he's off six inches, he's mad. He can really throw the ball. He's feeling it right now."

Carr credits much of the improvement to a new attitude after a sit-down with Gruden in which he was told not to worry about his statistics and just to trust his instincts to do what's right.

NFL

Broncos' Keenum suffering from abundance of caution

By ARNIE STAPLETON

Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Case Keenum agrees he's gone from being too careless with the football to being too cautious.

Denver's quarterback said Tuesday he concurs with head coach Vance Joseph that he needs to take more downfield chances if the Broncos (6-7) are to have any chance of reaching the playoffs.

"Yeah, I mean we're at the point of the season where we've got to make plays. We've got to score points," Keenum said. "... I can't get caught back there with the ball in my hands. And I've got to give guys chances down the field."

Keenum hasn't thrown an interception in his last five starts after throwing 10 in his first eight games in Denver, but his passing numbers are pedestrian lately. He's averaged just 178 yards passing in his last three games and he's already been sacked a career-high 30 times.

So, Keenum said he'll balance ball security with the risk-reward of taking his chances down the seams beginning Saturday night against the Cleveland Browns (5-7-1).

"In general, that's a good mindset to have," Keenum said. "And I think ... continuing to be smart



**Cleveland Browns (5-7-1)
at Denver Broncos (6-7)**

APN-Atlantic

2:20 a.m. Sunday CET

10:20 a.m. Sunday JKT

with the ball but giving guys chances when we feel like it's a good matchup or good, advantageous time to take a shot or take a chance down the field."

Keenum was scolded early on for throwing too many interceptions, including three against Seattle in the opener. After going all of November and half of December without getting picked off, he's now drawing criticism for being too conservative.

It comes with the territory, Keenum said.

"I mean, quarterback is a tough position to play, and that's why I play it. I love the challenge of it," Keenum said. "I want to win. I'm a winner. I'm competitive to a fault and I think that's what partly drives me and makes me who I am. So, yeah, I take it on myself

that I've got to do better. I've got to play better. I've got to give my guys chances down the field and that's it."

Making his task harder is an injury epidemic that has nearly dismantled Denver's offense.

Keenum is playing behind a line that consists of converted guard Connor McGovern at center and four tackles, including Billy Turner at left guard and Elijah Wilkinson at right guard, following season-ending injuries to Matt Paradis, Ronald Leary and Max Garcia.

Tight ends Troy Fumagalli, Jake Butt and Jeff Heurman all are on IR and Keenum lost his two favorite receivers, Demaryius Thomas to a trade and Emmanuel Sanders to a ruptured Achilles.

Now, his No. 1 receiver is rookie Courtland Sutton, but he missed Tuesday's walkthrough practice with a thigh injury, making fellow rookie DaeSean Hamilton his flanker du jour.

So, even if Keenum heeds his coach's admonition to start taking more chances downfield, there's no guarantee his raw receivers or young tight ends will make the emphasis a success.

"I've said that early on, that it takes time to work with guys, but you know this is the NFL," Keenum said. "It's the nature of the business."



JEFF HAYNES/AP

Broncos quarterback Case Keenum hasn't thrown an interception in his last five starts after throwing 10 in his first eight games in Denver, but his passing numbers have dipped as he has grown more conservative with his play. He's averaged just 178 yards passing in his last three games and has been sacked a career-high 30 times.

Armed: Mayfield blossoming as he gains confidence, coaches' trust

FROM BACK PAGE

yards — to receiver Breshad Perriman, who hauled in the deep pass to set up Cleveland's first TD.

The play exemplified Mayfield's confidence, and the trust he's built with Cleveland's coaching staff.

"That was a rocket and that was a long throw and it is a long throw on the money," Williams said. "In practices, we have seen longer throws and we have seen even more accurate throws that other people have not seen yet."

Mayfield showed off his arm — and accuracy — a little later with a 51-yard TD toss to receiver Jarvis Landry, who appeared to be well-covered on the play. Mayfield, though, squeezed his throw between two defenders, showing both fearlessness and faith.

"It was where it needed to be," Landry said. "The guy's back was turned. The corner that was coming from the outside was trying to squeeze it, and the ball literally went between both of them. It was a hell of a throw."

Mayfield is bringing the heat. The Browns (5-7-1) have won three of four going into this week's game in Denver, and in those victories, he has completed 79 percent of his passes (54-for-68) for 712 yards with eight TDs and no interceptions. Mayfield has also shown remarkable resiliency by shaking off a three-pick performance in the first half at Houston to pass for 351 yards in the second half while standing in the face of the Texans' tenacious pass rush led by J.J. Watt.

Williams has been cautious to heap too



JEFF HAYNES/AP

Cleveland Browns interim head coach Gregg Williams, left, talks with quarterback Baker Mayfield before their game against the Kansas City Chiefs earlier this month. The Browns have won three of four going into this week's game in Denver, and in those victories, he has completed 79 percent of his passes (54-for-68) for 712 yards with eight TDs and no interceptions.

much praise on the 23-year-old, but lately he has gone out of his way to compliment his young QB.

Following Wednesday's practice, Williams said Mayfield's arm was "off the charts" in terms of its liveliness.

"He had a live day on Sunday, but

(snaps fingers) came back today and it looked like it was even more live today," Williams said. "The first thing I thought was 'young'."

But beyond Mayfield's youth and the life in his high-velocity arm, Williams sees something special.

"He had a live day on Sunday, but (snaps fingers) came back today and it looked like it was even more live today."

Gregg Williams

Browns' interim coach, on QB Baker Mayfield after practice on Wednesday.

"The good quarterbacks, some of the times when some of us may judge a throw that, 'Wow, that was not a very good throw.' Why? Because it was on his back shoulder," Williams said.

"It was on his back shoulder because that is the way that the guy throws the player open. Drew Brees and some of those guys — Joe Montana, Warren Moon, Peyton Manning — and all of the guys that I have been with or gone against — will throw the guy open.

"He is doing that. That is a natural thing. That is not something that can be overly taught at this level. If we have to spend a lot of time trying to teach that at this level, he probably will never ever get it."

While the Browns remain a long shot to make the playoffs, S. Damarius Randall believes they belong in the postseason. "We feel like we're a playoff team," Randall said. "We feel like we deserve one of them six spots. We know we dug ourselves in a hole, and we know that we need some help. It starts with us winning out. If we win out, they just better not let us in the playoffs."

NFL

Patriots 'on to Pittsburgh' after debacle

By KYLE HIGHTOWER
Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — More times than not, the sight of Rob Gronkowski approaching the end zone has signaled good things happening for the New England Patriots.

Yet there was the image of Gronkowski awkwardly crashing to the ground in a desperate attempt to prevent Kenyan Drake from crossing the goal line during Sunday's last-second, 34-33 loss to the Dolphins.

Talk about something being the opposite of what people have come to expect from the Patriots.

While Miami's pass and double-lateral on the final 69-yard touchdown play got all the attention in the aftermath of Sunday's loss, coach Bill Belichick reiterated there were other miscues that contributed.

There was Stephen Gostkowski's first missed extra point in 38 tries this season and only his second missed field goal inside 50 yards in 2018.

New England also missed a scoring opportunity at the end of the first half. Albert McClellan blocked a Miami punt inside the Dolphins 20, setting up the Patriots on the 15 with 14 seconds left and no timeouts. Tom Brady completed a 13-yard pass to Gronkowski to get the ball to the 2. But Brady was sacked by Robert Quinn on the next play — very unlikely Brady to miss a scoring opportunity — leaving New England's lead at 27-21 at halftime.

Finally, on its last series of the game, the offense failed to get into the end zone and settled for a 22-yard Gostkowski field goal, despite having a first-and-goal on the 7.

"I think there were a lot of things that could've been better in the entire game," Belichick said. "I think the game was about a lot more than that [final] play, but certainly that play wasn't a good one for us."

Belichick said the reason Gronkowski was at safety instead of Devin McCourty, one of New England's best defensive players: "It would be his ability to play the deep, long throw."

But the coach then admitted that Dolphins quarterback Ryan Tannehill probably didn't have the arm strength for such a desperation heave.

"I think it was a little too far to get to the end zone," Belichick said, "but certainly a deep pass in that situation is

a possibility. I wouldn't rule that out."

The irony of the ending is that it overshadowed one of Gronkowski's best performances of the season. The tight end finished with eight catches for 107 yards, marking the 28th 100-yard game of his career. The only tight end with more 100-yard games than Gronkowski is Tony Gonzalez with 31. It was just Gronkowski's second 100-yard receiving game this season and his first since New England's season opener.

Pullback James Develin also continued to impress with his fourth rushing touchdown in four games. He had one in his first 74 career games.

"It's going to test our character. It's going to test our mental toughness," Gronkowski said Sunday. "I mean, I feel like I've been going through that all year, and now to get to this point now. We've just got to keep working hard. We've just got to keep grinding. We've got to keep focusing and just come together as a team more."

Still, the loss only meant their route to reaching another Super Bowl will be that much tougher.

As stunned as New England's players felt as they trudged off the field following the loss, other surprise results around the conference on Sunday kept their hopes of securing a ninth consecutive first-round bye in the playoffs very much alive.

The Patriots (9-4) began preparations for their Week 15 game at Pittsburgh still on track to capture the second seed in the AFC behind Kansas City (11-2), which stayed in first place after fighting off Baltimore in overtime. Los Angeles is 10-3 after its win over Cincinnati and has the conference's second-best record. But the Chargers are division-mates with the Chiefs and would have to settle for a wild-card spot if nothing changes over the final three weeks of the regular season.

New England holds the head-to-head tiebreaker over Houston, which is also 9-4 after its loss to Indianapolis. And courtesy of the Steelers' loss to the Raiders, even should Pittsburgh (7-5-1) beat New England, it would still trail the Patriots in the AFC standings. The Texans could move ahead of the Patriots in the AFC if they beat the Jets.

Patriots center David Andrews said the fact they still have a say in where they finish up is the only thing they were thinking about when they walked back into the team facility Monday.

"We've got a lot we can do better. We got a big challenge

'We got a big challenge coming up this week, so that's what our focus is on.'

David Andrews
Patriots center



LYNNE SLADKY/AP

New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, center, looks down while on the sidelines during the second half of Sunday's loss to the Dolphins in Miami.

coming up this week, so that's what our focus is on," he said on Monday. "We can't do anything to change what happened yesterday, so we gotta move on." Special teams captain Matt Slater, invoking Belichick's classic parlance, said everyone in the locker room is officially "on to Pittsburgh."

"I don't think there's really much else to talk about," Slater said. "Over the course of the season it's gonna be very rare that things go your way all the time. And we've certainly been spoiled around here with some good fortune over the years. So we're just gonna move forward and focus on the Steelers and what we need to do to perform well there."

Faster pace helps Colts jump back into playoff hunt

By MICHAEL MAROT
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Frank Reich learned the value of an up-tempo offense playing in Buffalo.

He figured out how to deploy it more effectively as an assistant coach.

So with the Indianapolis Colts in an offensive funk Sunday, the first-year coach changed gears. He cranked up the tempo, wore down Houston's defense and watched the Colts rebound from a 5½-quarter scoring drought to earn a critical road victory.

"We know it's a weapon, we know it's an effective weapon, especially with the quarterback we have," Reich said, referring to Andrew Luck.

"To know that we can pull that tool out, that weapon out and use it in the preray way when we need it. I just think it's really the right way to do it."

Indy (7-6) desperately needed a switch against the Texans — after their playoff chances took a major hit the previous week when Luck ended their first shutout of his career.

It looked as if the Texans (9-4), winners of nine straight, might do it again when they held the Colts scoreless on their first four possessions. But then Reich threw a change-up that got Luck and his teammates back in sync.

They scored three times in the final 7½ minutes of the first half, matched the Texans' early second-half score and never trailed again.



MICHAEL WYKE/AP

Colts quarterback Andrew Luck, right, celebrates with running back Marlon Mack after securing a win against the Texans on Sunday.

The victory allowed Indy to move into a four-way tie with Baltimore, Miami and division rival Tennessee for the AFC's sixth and final playoff spot and gave them some needed momentum heading into back-to-back home games against Dallas and the New York Giants.

The Colts close out the regular season at Tennessee.

And with Luck rolling, the possibility of ending a three-year postseason absence is a real possibility. Indy already has beaten the Titans and Dolphins, potential tiebreak-

ers, even though nobody around the Colts' complex dares discuss anything other than this weekend's showdown against the NFC East-leading Cowboys.

"Looking forward to keeping that same mindset and attitude coming back home against another hot team in the Dallas Cowboys," Reich said Monday. "So it will be a good test for us."

What exactly the Cowboys will see is anybody's guess.

Luck threw two more touchdown passes in Houston, giving him 34 — second in the

league to Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes (43). T.Y. Hilton caught nine passes for 199 yards, giving the Colts the deep threat they lacked in Jacksonville. Eric Ebron caught another TD pass, his 12th of the season.

But the lingering question is whether Reich intends to continue relying on the no-huddle offense that kept the Texans' defense on its heels?

"Believe me, I love the no-huddle, I have done the no-huddle for years as a player and as a coach," Reich said.

"We did a lot of really good things, but ultimately we just think that the best formula is to be multiple, to use all your personnel and to create some schematic advantages that you can do by huddling."

The Colts certainly have shown they can exploit mismatches.

Luck has had more success than anyone in the league connecting with tight ends. Marlon Mack has given the Colts a solid ground game and Hilton remains a reliable threat in whatever he is asked to do.

Reich believes the Colts will be better off employing the no-huddle at their discretion.

"When you go no-huddle, T.Y. ends up at the same position all the time," Reich said. "By not being exclusively no-huddle we can move guys around in positions," Reich said. "We can put T.Y. where we want to, we can switch personnel groups, we can put offensive linemen in at tight end to throw deep play-action shots that we put in, to have an extra offensive lineman in to do some stuff in the running game."



GAMEDAY

WEEK 15

TELEVISED GAMES



Miami Dolphins (7-6)
at **Minnesota Vikings (6-6-1)**

AFN-Sports

7 p.m. Sunday CET

3 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Dolphins lead 7-4.

Last meeting: Dolphins beat Vikings 37-35, Dec. 21, 2014.

Notes: Dolphins have won past three meetings. ... Dolphins' 69-yard TD last week was longest play from scrimmage to win game with no time left since 1970 merger. ... Dolphins RB Frank Gore had 116 scrimmage yards last week. ... Vikings QB Kirk Cousins passed for 208 yards and one TD last week.



Dallas Cowboys (8-5)
at **Indianapolis Colts (7-6)**

AFN-Sports2

7 p.m. Sunday CET

3 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Cowboys lead 10-5.

Last meeting: Cowboys beat Colts 42-7, Dec. 21, 2014.

Notes: Cowboys have won past three meetings. ... Cowboys QB Dak Prescott completed 42 of 54 passes for a career-high 455 yards with three TDs last week. ... Colts WR TY. Hilton had nine catches for 199 yards last week. Has 566 receiving yards and two TD catches in past four games.

Marquee matchup

New England Patriots (9-4) at Pittsburgh Steelers (7-5-1)

AFN-Sports, 10:25 p.m. Sunday CET; 6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

SERIES RECORD: Steelers lead 14-12.
LAST MEETING: Patriots beat Steelers 27-24, Dec. 17, 2017.

LAST WEEK: Patriots lost to Dolphins 34-33; Steelers lost to Raiders 24-21.

PATRIOTS OFFENSE: OVERALL (5), RUSH (16), PASS (7).

PATRIOTS DEFENSE: OVERALL (22), RUSH (15), PASS (23).

STEELERS OFFENSE: OVERALL (4), RUSH (29), PASS (2).

STEELERS DEFENSE: OVERALL (7), RUSH (6), PASS (12).

STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES:

Patriots have won last five meetings. ... New England can clinch 10th straight AFC East title with win or tie and Miami loss or tie vs. Minnesota. ... Victory would give Patriots 10 on season for 16th straight year, tying NFL record held by San Francisco (1983-98). ... Playoff

berth would be 17th for coach Bill Belichick, third all-time behind Don Shula (19), Tom Landry (18). ... New England QB Tom Brady 11-2 all-time against Steelers including playoffs. Brady has thrown 30 touchdowns against Steelers against four interceptions. ... Brady will start 265th game, tied with Peyton Manning for second all-time by quarterback. ... Patriots RB Sony Michel's three 100-yard rushing games most by New England rookie since 1998 (Robert Edwards). ... Roethlisberger expected to play despite bruised ribs suffered last week vs. Oakland. ... Roethlisberger second in NFL in yards passing (4,227). ... Steelers RB James Conner (ankle) could return after sitting out last week. ... Pittsburgh 10-2 at Heinz Field in December since 2013.

One of losses was last year's setback to Patriots. Other came two weeks ago to Los Angeles Chargers. ... Steelers K Chris Boswell's 11 combined missed kicks (six field goals, five extra points) most by active kicker in NFL. ... Pittsburgh WR Juju Smith-Schuster sixth in NFL in receptions (91), fourth in yards receiving (1,234).

—Associated Press



Patriots running back Sony Michel

Winslow/Townson/AP Images for Panini



Seattle Seahawks (8-5)
at **San Francisco 49ers (3-10)**

AFN-Sports2

7 p.m. Sunday CET

3 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Seahawks lead 24-15.

Last meeting: Seahawks beat 49ers 43-16, Dec. 2, 2018.

Notes: Seahawks have won past nine meetings. ... Seahawks QB Russell Wilson passed for four TDs in Week 13 meeting. ... 49ers RB Jeff Wilson Jr. had career-high 134 scrimmage yards (73 receiving, 61 rushing) in week 13 meeting. ... 49ers TE George Kittle had seven catches for 210 yards last week.



Philadelphia Eagles (6-7)
at **Los Angeles Rams (11-2)**

AFN-Sports

2 a.m. Monday CET

10 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Eagles lead 20-17-1.

Last meeting: Eagles beat Rams 43-35, Dec. 10, 2017.

Notes: Eagles have won past five meetings. ... Eagles QB Carson Wentz completed 22 of 32 passes for 228 yards with three TDs last week. ... Rams QB Jared Goff ranks fourth in NFL with 3,934 passing yards this season. He's 6-0 at home with a 70.1 percent completion percentage.

Also on AFN:

Washington Redskins (6-7) at **Jacksonville Jaguars (4-9)**, AFN-Atlantic, 7 p.m. Sunday CET; 3 a.m. Monday JKT

EXPANDED STANDINGS

American Conference

	East										North										
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	
New England	9	4	0	.692	364	293	6-0-0	3-4-0	6-3-0	3-1-0	3-1-0		Dallas	7	6	0	.615	276	246	6-1-0	2-4-0
Miami	7	6	0	.538	278	333	6-1-0	1-5-0	6-4-0	1-2-0	1-4-0		Philadelphia	6	7	0	.462	281	295	4-3-0	2-4-0
Buffalo	4	9	0	.308	201	320	2-4-0	2-5-0	3-7-0	1-2-0	1-3-0		Washington	6	7	0	.462	249	297	3-4-0	3-3-0
N.Y. Jets	4	9	0	.308	270	330	2-4-0	2-5-0	3-7-0	1-2-0	1-4-0		N.Y. Giants	5	8	0	.385	307	331	2-4-0	3-4-0
Houston	9	4	0	.692	323	259	5-2-0	4-2-0	7-3-0	2-1-0	3-2-0		y-New Orleans	11	2	0	.846	447	283	5-1-0	6-1-0
Indianapolis	7	6	0	.538	349	300	4-2-0	3-4-0	6-5-0	1-1-0	3-2-0		Carolina	6	7	0	.462	324	332	5-1-0	1-6-0
Tennessee	7	6	0	.538	251	254	5-1-0	2-5-0	5-6-0	2-0-0	1-1-0		Tampa Bay	5	8	0	.385	332	383	4-3-0	1-5-0
Jacksonville	4	9	0	.308	212	273	3-4-0	1-5-0	3-7-0	1-2-0	1-4-0		Atlanta	4	9	0	.308	316	367	3-4-0	1-5-0
Pittsburgh	7	5	1	.577	367	306	3-3-0	4-2-1	4-5-1	3-0-0	1-1-0		Chicago	9	4	0	.692	359	247	6-1-0	3-3-0
Baltimore	7	6	0	.538	321	241	4-2-0	3-4-0	6-4-0	1-2-0	1-3-0		Minnesota	6	6	1	.500	282	291	4-2-0	2-4-1
Cleveland	5	7	1	.423	292	332	4-2-1	1-5-0	3-5-1	2-2-0	2-1-1		Green Bay	5	7	1	.423	315	307	5-1-1	0-6-0
Cincinnati	5	8	0	.385	307	397	3-4-0	2-4-0	3-6-0	2-2-0	1-3-0		Detroit	5	8	0	.385	271	319	3-4-0	2-4-0
x-Kansas City	11	2	0	.846	471	351	6-0-0	5-2-0	9-1-0	2-1-0	4-0-0		y-L.A. Rams	11	2	0	.846	425	313	6-0-0	5-2-0
L.A. Chargers	10	3	0	.769	366	270	5-2-0	5-1-0	7-2-0	2-1-0	4-0-0		Seattle	8	5	0	.615	340	266	4-2-0	4-3-0
Denver	6	7	0	.462	290	282	3-3-0	3-4-0	4-5-0	2-2-0	2-2-0		Arizona	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
Oakland	3	10	0	.231	244	388	2-5-0	1-5-0	2-7-0	1-3-0	0-4-0		San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	275	350	3-3-0	0-7-0

x-clinched playoff spot y-clinched division

x-clinched playoff spot; y-clinched division

National Conference

	East										West										
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	NFC	AFC	Div		W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	
Dallas	8	5	0	.615	276	246	6-1-0	2-4-0	7-3-0	1-2-0	4-1-0		San Diego	10	3	0	.769	366	270	5-2-0	5-1-0
Philadelphia	6	7	0	.462	281	295	4-3-0	2-4-0	4-6-0	2-1-0	3-2-0		San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
Washington	6	7	0	.462	249	297	3-4-0	3-3-0	4-5-0	0-2-0	2-3-0		Seattle	8	5	0	.615	340	266	4-2-0	4-3-0
N.Y. Giants	5	8	0	.385	307	331	2-4-0	3-4-0	6-7-0	1-1-0	1-4-0		Arizona	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
y-New Orleans	11	2	0	.846	447	283	5-1-0	6-1-0	8-2-0	3-0-0	3-1-0		San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
Carolina	6	7	0	.462	324	332	5-1-0	1-6-0	4-5-0	2-2-0	1-2-0		Seattle	8	5	0	.615	340	266	4-2-0	4-3-0
Tampa Bay	5	8	0	.385	332	383	4-3-0	1-5-0	4-6-0	1-2-0	2-3-0		Arizona	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
Atlanta	4	9	0	.308	316	367	3-4-0	1-5-0	4-5-0	0-4-0	2-2-0		San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
Chicago	9	4	0	.692	359	247	6-1-0	3-3-0	7-2-0	2-2-0	3-1-0		San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
Minnesota	6	6	1	.500	282	291	4-2-0	2-4-1	5-4-1	1-2-0	2-1-1		Seattle	8	5	0	.615	340	266	4-2-0	4-3-0
Green Bay	5	7	1	.423	315	307	5-1-1	0-6-0	3-6-1	2-1-0	1-2-1		Arizona	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
Detroit	5	8	0	.385	271	319	3-4-0	2-4-0	3-7-0	2-1-0	1-3-0		San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
y-L.A. Rams	11	2	0	.846	425	313	6-0-0	5-2-0	7-2-0	4-0-0	4-0-0		San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
Seattle	8	5	0	.615	340	266	4-2-0	4-3-0	7-3-0	1-2-0	2-2-0		Seattle	8	5	0	.615	340	266	4-2-0	4-3-0
Arizona	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0	3-6-0	0-4-0	2-2-0		Arizona	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0
San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	275	350	3-3-0	0-7-0	1-8-0	2-2-0	0-4-0		San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	178	327	1-6-0	2-4-0

REST OF THE SCHEDULE

Tennessee at N.Y. Giants
Green Bay at Chicago
Detroit at Buffalo
Tampa Bay at Baltimore
Arizona at Atlanta
Oakland at Cincinnati
Monday's game
New Orleans at Carolina

NEXT WEEK

Saturday, Dec. 22
Washington at Tennessee
Baltimore at L.A. Chargers
Sunday, Dec. 23
Atlanta at Carolina
Houston at Philadelphia
N.Y. Giants at Indianapolis
Green Bay at N.Y. Jets
Minnesota at Detroit
Buffalo at New England
Cincinnati at Cleveland
Jacksonville at Miami
Tampa Bay at Dallas
L.A. Rams at Arizona
Chicago at San Francisco
Pittsburgh at New Orleans
Kansas City at Seattle
Monday, Dec. 24
Denver at Oakland

SPORTS



Dynamic duo

Lawrence, Etienne anchor high-octane
Clemson offense » **College football, Page 59**

NFL

AP photos

ARMED *AND* DANGEROUS

QB Mayfield bringing the heat as
Browns keep playoff hopes alive

By TOM WITHERS
Associated Press

As Baker Mayfield threw long passes to his wide receivers and short ones to backs before Sunday's game against Carolina, Browns interim coach Gregg Williams knew his rookie quarterback was going to have a good game.

It wasn't any sight.

It was a sound.

"You can hear the ball come out of the quarterback's hand with a 'sssssst' and you can hear how tight the ball was coming out of his hand," Williams said. "It was bringing a smile to my face when I saw him warm up and really the entire game he was zipping it."

**'I woke
up feeling
dangerous.'**

Baker Mayfield
Browns quarterback

Mayfield zipped it all day long, completing a 66-yard pass on Cleveland's first play and whipping several passes into tight coverage during a 26-20 victory that gave the Browns their fifth win and kept their faint playoff hopes flickering.

Mayfield's arm strength isn't usually the first thing mentioned when discussing the No. 1 overall pick's top attributes. More often his accuracy, leadership and, of course, abundant confidence are brought up first. But Mayfield, whose "I woke up feeling dangerous" has become a catchphrase around Cleveland, has shown he can rear back and fire the ball with any quarterback.

After the Browns fell behind the Panthers 7-0, Mayfield quickly stripped Carolina of momentum by throwing a laser down the field — the ball traveled more than 60

SEE ARMED ON PAGE 61

Inside:

■ Amid criticism, Broncos' Keenum says he'll take more chances, Page 61



Bulls heading to Mexico at turbulent time » NBA, Page 56

